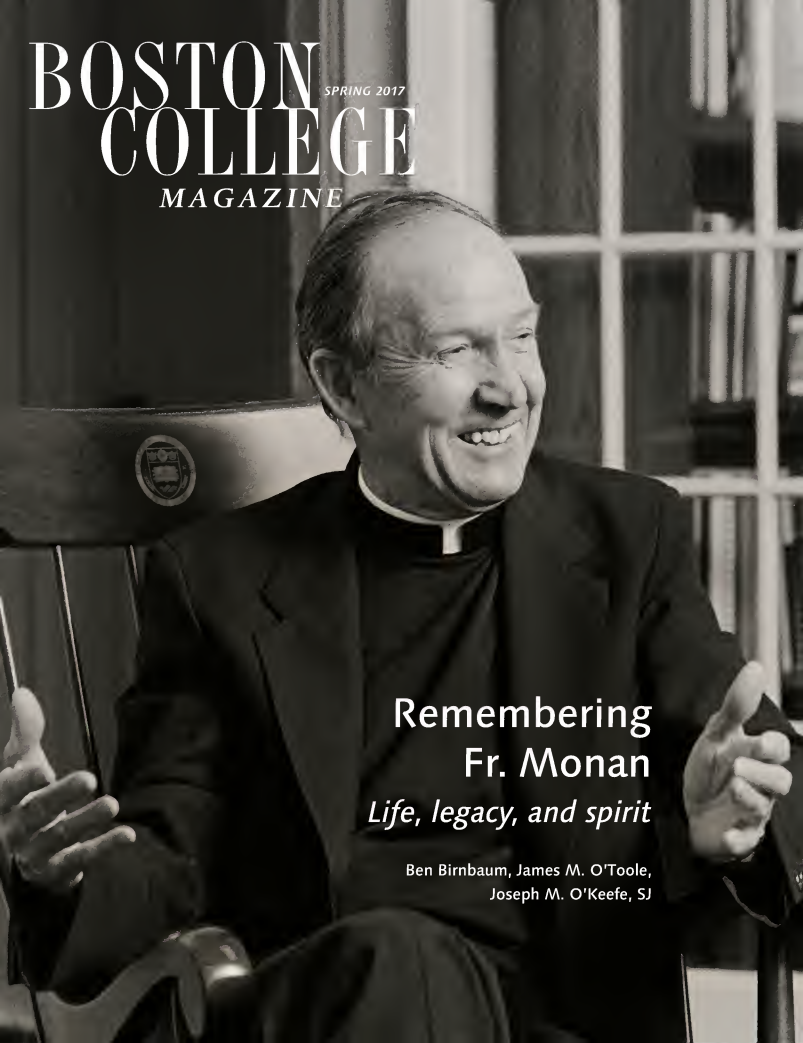


# BOSTON COLLEGE

SPRING 2017

## MAGAZINE



### Remembering Fr. Monan

*Life, legacy, and spirit*

Ben Birnbaum, James M. O'Toole,  
Joseph M. O'Keefe, SJ

# PROLOGUE

## JDM: THE MOVIE

Not long after J. Donald Monan, SJ, became president in September 1972, Boston College produced a brief film that was distributed to alumni clubs as an introduction to the institution's new leader, the first in many years to be appointed from outside the University's faculty. I first saw the movie on a video cassette, borrowed from University Archives, shortly after Monan announced that he was stepping down, and while I was writing "JDM: A Season of Farewell," which appeared in the Summer 1996 edition of this magazine. The following is excerpted from that story.

—BEN BIRNBAUM

It was the fall of 1972, and Boston College was an institution shaken by financial shortfalls, fractious students, and alumni angry at an administration and faculty that, in their view, had surrendered to the kids without firing a shot. The film's title, *A New President*, may sound flat to contemporary ears, but it would have appeared quite pointed in the fall of 1972, when alumni yearned for a president—any president—who wasn't W. Seavey Joyce, SJ, who'd served the University during its hardest moments since World War II had drained the institution of its students and income.

The production, while charmingly retro to contemporary eyes (it seems to have been shot without benefit of electric lighting or a script, for examples), is equally pointed—a 24-minute-long assurance that Boston College was now in confident, young, vigorous, and responsible hands. One of the segments shows what seems to be a pickup game in the gloaming in the old hockey arena, McHugh Forum. The camera finds a slim, grinning skater as he weaves up the ice like he knows what he's doing. Crossing the blue line, he takes a soft pass from Athletic Director Bill Flynn '39, M.Ed.'40, and then, while the defense hangs back politely, he pops the puck over the goalie's stick and into the net. The voiceover meanwhile reminds us that Monan "was a defenseman for his championship high-school team." [He was, in fact, the goalie.]

In a similar vein, another movie segment finds the pipe-smoking president seated at his desk in a sea of argumentative long-haired male students and their silent long-haired female companions, discussing the purposes of education. "Is learning something we're beginning to be afraid of?" the president wants to know. "Where does learning fit into the lifestyle that you call college?" He listens attentively to the responses and then asks whether "the youth culture" is

"anti-intellectual." After some hemming and hawing, one of the young men admits that there may be "traces" of anti-intellectualism here and there and then veers off. Not fast enough. JDM sets the hook. "What traces?" he smiles.

IN OTHER SEGMENTS HE ADDRESSES NEWLY ARRIVED freshmen, meets with the extravagantly side-burned members of the faculty senate, speaks at Faculty Convocation, receives the extravagantly side-burned mayor of Newton, watches a football game from the president's box (he attended every home game, the narration notes), tells the press that the finances are going to be just fine, celebrates a folk Mass on the steps of Baptist Library, and winces when he learns from a dean that 33 faculty are likely to apply for tenure that year.

I watched a video of the film several times one evening, trying to note differences between the JDM of 1972 and the JDM of 1996, and I concluded that there weren't any except that he appears to have been younger in 1972.

The joy with which he jumps into intellectual tug of war, pulling the rope of logic before anyone else has even set his or her feet. The sincere optimism in the face of everything; "[You are] capable of setting new standards of excellence," he urges a faculty who might have been satisfied to be assured that they were capable of meeting a couple of old standards and keeping their jobs. The spring of enthusiasm that buoys certain phrases when he speaks: "You're going to be met with an *avalanche* of interests," he tells the freshmen assembled in their folding chairs in the cavelike darkness of the old basketball arena, Roberts Center. His occasional lapse into an upstate New York "awl" for "all." Then as now, it's Monan.

So I gave that up and tried instead to watch the film through the eyes of a member of the Class of 1955, say, who in December of 1972 is invited to come by after a day at the office and sit in a classmate's living room with other alumni, have a beer, talk about the kids and business, and watch a film about the "new" Boston College president projected onto a portable screen.

If I am that man, I come away thinking that this guy Monan—or is it Moran?—seems to be having a pretty good time, and I just hope he knows how to run the place, too.

Our stories begin on page 28.

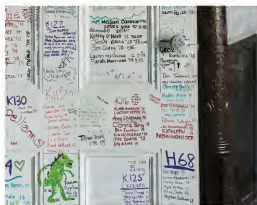


The 1972 film *A New President* has been digitized by University Archives. It may be viewed via Full Story at [bc.edu/bcm](http://bc.edu/bcm).

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#### GET THE FULL STORY, AT BCM ONLINE:

Watch *A New President*, the 24-minute video that introduced alumni to J. Donald Monan, SJ, in 1972.

- Read Fr. Monan's full obituary. • View the panel discussion on "Leadership through Conscience, Service, and Relationships" (pg. 42). • Order *Echoes of a University Presidency*, by J. Donald Monan, SJ (pg. 41); *The River, the Plain, and the State* (pg. 46), by associate professor of history Ling Zhang; and *Rafael Soriano: The Artist as Mystic* (pg. 48) at a discount from the Boston College Bookstore. Also: • READER'S LIST: Books by alumni, faculty, and staff

# BOSTON COLLEGE

MAGAZINE VOLUME 77 NUMBER 2 SPRING 2017

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# LETTERS

## PATHWAYS

Re "What's My Line?," by Zachary Jason  
(Winter 2017): I applaud Boston College  
for the Endeavor program, the three-  
day exploration of career opportunities  
offered by the Career Center to sopho-  
mores pursuing majors in the liberal arts.  
I was fortunate to be a member of the  
healthcare panel on January 12th (and also  
organized a site visit for student partici-  
pants the next day). The students' ques-  
tions were smart, and they weren't afraid  
to raise concerns. Many of the student  
participants have followed up with me and  
colleagues of mine.

Students who took part in the program  
should know that they affected the speak-  
ers just as much as we (hopefully) affected  
them. Endeavor is a true embodiment of  
the University's motto, "Ever to Excel."

Angelique Hrycko '08  
Portsmouth, New Hampshire

*The author is a senior project manager at  
Boston Children's Hospital.*

The idea of looking toward and focusing  
on the future is good, but maybe a bet-  
ter question to pose to the students who  
took part in Endeavor would be, "What  
does 'Ever To Excel' mean to you?" Our  
future hardly ever turns out to be what  
we thought it would be as sophomores, or  
even later in life. So what is to be the guid-  
ing principle or set of principles that chart  
our courses?

That is a philosophical question and  
less career-oriented, but it calms the  
waters and allows students to open their  
minds to opportunities they might have  
been less likely to follow under a "career  
path" mentality.

I came to Boston College from the  
Marine Corps during the Vietnam War,  
graduated with a major in accounting,  
and worked in accounting for about eight  
years, becoming a supervisor. I then  
transitioned to construction, as a concrete  
formsetter, a job that had helped put me  
through Boston College, and I worked

in that field until I retired. How does that  
fit with "Ever To Excel"? It boils down  
to who I am. I am happy with who I am. I  
have helped many people.

Boston College is about forming peo-  
ple, not robots.

Phil Krenschler '70  
Brown Deer, Wisconsin

The Endeavor program reminded me of a  
poem by the 19th-century Bengali polymath  
Rabindranath Tagore titled "Vocation." In  
it, a child searches for his calling, imagin-  
ing the lives of various people, including  
a gardener: "He does what he likes with  
his spade, he soils his clothes with dust,  
nobody takes him to task if he gets baked  
in the sun or gets wet. I wish I were a  
gardener digging away at the garden with  
nobody to stop me from digging. . . ." *Endeavor* was this poem in motion. The  
audience was filled with explorers and the  
program reinforced the power and impor-  
tance of a liberal arts education. I left with  
envy for the students' chance to spend a  
few days speaking about what the future  
may hold and asking candid questions  
about occupations, vocations, and the dis-  
tinction between the two.

What do you want to do? This was  
asked of me when I was younger, and it  
was not until much later that I realized the  
answer is, and always was, to grow.

It was an honor to come back to cam-  
pus and help plant seeds that will one day  
blossom into fruitful careers.

Frantz M. Berthaud '08  
Boston, Massachusetts

*The author, a manager in clinical growth  
at the Dana-Farber Cancer Institute, was a  
healthcare panelist.*

## SONGS OF PRAISE

Re "The Singer Jo Jo David (1966-2016),"  
by Ben Birnbaum (Winter 2017): As a  
vocalist in BC bOp! during JoJo's struggle  
with cancer, I received his stirring emails  
that always began "Hello my friends."  
Later, as his colleague, working with the

Boston College Liturgy Arts Group, I was able to witness weekly his remarkable capacity for friendship and care.

Jojo did not just teach me about singing, jazz, and ministry. He taught me about friendship by the way he lived his life. Even after his passing, his memorial and his legacy teach me that faith, family, and friendship are the most important things we can pursue in this life.

The song that summed up his memorial for me was Jojo's own "Tribute," which his friends from Five O'Clock Shadow and the University of Colorado, Boulder, sang just before we all exited the sanctuary into the late October night: "Let us sing a tribute to life as friends."

Margaret Felice '02, M'12  
Boston, Massachusetts

*The author is assistant director of the Boston College Liturgy Arts Group.*

"His life . . . a ministry in its entirety"—I was so moved by Mr. Birnbaum's tribute to Jojo David. I was in BC bOp! from 2003 to 2005, and I was in St. Ignatius Church for the vigil celebrating his life. In the final moments of the memorial, the a cappella group Five O'Clock Shadow, of which Jojo had been a tenor, sang a song I first learned as a student at Newton North High School, where Jojo had student-taught, and then took pride in performing at Robsham with the BC bOp! vocal ensemble. Aptly titled "Tribute," the song honors a chapter's end and celebrates having traversed for some time as friends.

Jojo was teacher, mentor, director, and friend to me and so many others, encouraging all of us, as "Tribute" says, to sing songs of elation, to "live for the moment," and to "take pride in our years." His legacy is one of light, love, and lyrics, in which his wife and daughter can take consummate pride.

Danielle Naugler '06  
Waltham, Massachusetts

To say that a teacher "touches the future" may seem a cliché, but in Jojo's case it is true. I met Jojo in 1998 and had the privilege of learning from him as a vocalist in BC bOp! for four years. He cultivated a close-knit group, and challenged us to blend five- and seven-part dissonant har-

monies. Of course, Jojo taught more than music, lessons that remain with me today.

We watched as Jojo battled disease and descended into what seemed like a hopeless place, and yet he continued to project joy—as if to call back to us, "There's still light down here." I feel blessed to have known him and to have participated in his musical compositions. His melodies still provide comfort when I'm worried and remind me to recognize my blessings, even on a difficult day. He lived a life of joy, he set it to music, and his lessons are imprinted on our hearts forever.

Joanna (McInnis) Modica '02, M.Ed. '04  
Needham, Massachusetts

I was a member of BC bOp!, first as a trumpeter, then as a singer. Jojo was our vocal director. I still remember his sense of calm, kindness, and patience. He was respectful of the people around him. As a teacher, I have been reflecting on my own practices in the classroom, and Jojo has been on my mind as a role model. I am lucky to have worked with him.

Ron Nahass '99  
New York, New York

*The author is a music teacher at St. Luke's School in New York City.*

Jojo David's life was a blessed gift to everyone in the Boston College community. He gave his time to BC bOp!, in which I played saxophone. He gave his artistry and creativity freely. He gave his love to his family and friends.

After cancer took so much away from him, the miracle to behold was how much more he had to give. We are all better people for receiving his gifts and our lives will forever be touched by his spirit.

Patrick Osborne '97  
Charlestown, Massachusetts

## BANDING TOGETHER

Re "The Legacy," by Mick Moloney (Winter 2017): I was pleasantly surprised to find a picture circa 1928 of my father from his days as a member of Dan Sullivan's Shamrock Band, where he was known, I'm told, as "the best left-handed banjo player in Boston." He was also, I believe, among the very few of those Irish musicians pictured who actually per-

formed on stage at Boston College. That came to pass because I cajoled him into being the musical support for a duet my sister (now a Sister of Charity) and I sang to the tune of "The World is Waiting for the Sunrise" at the Junior Show for the class of 1955.

In 1985, Séamus Connolly played his fiddle at my father's funeral at St. Peter's in Dorchester. His performance reminded me of the custom in New Orleans where the funeral procession marches to the graveyard with a slow, dirge-like tune but leaves with a sprightly, almost celebratory finale.

James C. Nolan '55, MSW '61, P'79  
Westborough, Massachusetts

## CHARACTER WITNESS

Re "And Now," by Zachary Jason (Fall 2016): This story was terrific. In (2014, I wrote an article about Roseann Sdoia, another survivor of the Boston Marathon bombing, and I was concerned about getting the tone of the story right. I know Mr. Jason did.

Sheila (Riley) Eppolito '84  
Chelmsford, Massachusetts

Amplification: Peg Dwyer, M.Ed. '56, H'98, a University vice president from 1975 to 1997, has written with additional history on the development of a museum of art at Boston College ("Illumination," by Jane Whitehead, Fall 2016). In 1977, she relates, as Newton College of the Sacred Heart was being consolidated into Boston College, "J. Donald Monan, SJ, then University President, hired Marianne Martin from New York University to merge Newton College's traditionally strong program in studio arts with the fine arts department of Boston College. It was she who set the goal of the University having its own museum, with the full support of Fr. Monan." In History of Boston College: From the Beginnings to 1990, Charles Donovan, SJ, '33, M.Ed. '45, H'78, et al., record that Martin directed the gallery that opened in 1988 in Devlin Hall until her death in 1989.

BCM welcomes letters from readers.

Letters may be edited for length and clarity, and must be signed to be published. Our fax number is (617) 552-2441; our email address is bcm@bc.edu.

# Lipden Lane

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## CAMPUS DIGEST

Dining Services hosted **Cooking Across Borders: Foods from Syria**, a banquet at which some 60 students and faculty, acting as sous chefs alongside Dining Services staff, helped prepare (and consume) dishes such as Ottolenghi fattoush, a pita-based salad, and shorbit adas, a lentil soup. The evening was conceived by Lynne Christy Anderson, director of English Language Learning and author of *Breaking Bread: Recipes and Stories from Immigrant Kitchens* (2010). ✱ Laura O'Dwyer, associate professor in the Lynch School of Education's department of educational research, measurement, and evaluation, received a **\$3.8 million grant** from the National Science Foundation to study the effectiveness of the Transition to Algebra Project, a curriculum created by the nonprofit Education Development Center to help high-school freshmen succeed at mathematics. ✱ During the 2016–17 academic year, 15 undergraduates received **Fulbright awards** in support of a year abroad teaching, studying, or conducting research. In the past decade, 194 Boston College students have garnered Fulbrights. ✱ R. Nicholas Burns '78, H'02, former U.S. Under Secretary of State and ambassador to NATO, was the featured speaker at the 66th **Laetare Sunday** celebration, held in Conte Forum. ✱ Two assistant professors of mathematics, Ian Biringier, whose work focuses on hyperbolic geometry, and Dubi Kelmer, who studies homogeneous dynamics, received **CAREER awards** from the National Science Foundation. The award provides a five-year grant for early-

career faculty who "most effectively integrate research and education." ✱ Eleven **faculty were promoted** to full professor and 17 to associate professor with tenure. ✱ The 1,700 tickets on offer for this year's Plexapalooza concert sold out in six minutes. The event featured **Marshmello**, an electronic dance music producer and DJ whose identity is hidden by a large white marshmallow mask. ✱ The undergraduate **Latin American Business Club** held its fourth Leadership Conference, bringing leaders from Latin American government, business, and NGOs to campus for discussions on the changing relations between Latin America and the United States. ✱ The University's new 244,000-square-foot **recreation center** will be named in honor of the Connell family, in recognition of a \$50 million gift to the *Light the World* campaign from Trustee associate Margot C. Connell, widow of William F. Connell '59, for whom the school of nursing is named. The four-story facility, which will replace the RecPlex, is under construction on the site of the former Edmond's Hall and will open in summer 2019. ✱ The student-run bicycle rental program **Bike BC** doubled (to 20) its stable of bikes. The 10 additional machines will be stationed on the Newton Campus. ✱ The **Gabelli Presidential Scholars** program, which combines an honors academic program with service learning and travel abroad, celebrated its 25th anniversary. Gabelli Scholar Jesse Mu '17 was awarded a 2017 Winston Churchill Scholarship, given to the nation's top



**PRESS CONFERENCE**—On April 24 in Yawkey Center, Martin Jarmond, deputy director of athletics at the Ohio State University (OSU), was introduced by University President William P. Leahy, SJ, as the next William V. Campbell Director of Athletics. Jarmond, who before serving at OSU was assistant athletics director for development at Michigan State University, is a graduate of the University of North Carolina at Wilmington, where he was two-time captain of the basketball team and earned All-CAA academic honors. He holds an MBA and a master's degree in sports administration from Ohio University. In February, *Sports Business Daily Journal* named the 37-year-old to its "Forty Under 40" class of 2017. Jarmond's goal at Boston College, he said, "is to develop the academic, athletic, spiritual, and social dimensions of the student-athletes, and to win."

science, mathematics, and engineering students (Mu majored in computer science and minored in mathematics), in support of a year's graduate study at the University of Cambridge. ✖ The Board of Trustees announced **undergraduate tuition** for the 2017–18 academic year will be \$52,500. Overall, tuition, fees, and room and board will increase by 3.6 percent, bringing the total annual cost to \$67,488. Need-based financial aid for undergraduates will increase by 5.8 percent, to \$120.5 million, with the average need-based aid package expected to exceed \$43,000. ✖ Some 55 students stayed (mostly) on their feet for 12 hours in the RecPlex during the Boston College **Dance Marathon**, raising almost \$26,000 for Boston's Children's Hospital. ✖ Director of athletics **Brad Bates** announced he will

depart at the end of the academic year to join Collegiate Sports Associates, an executive search and consulting firm. ✖ Steven Guerrero '18 was awarded the Archbishop Oscar A. Romero **Scholarship**, given to a junior in recognition of academic achievement, leadership, service, and involvement in the Latino community. This year's recipient of the Benigno and Corazon Aquino Scholarship was Miriam George '18. ✖ The London-based educational information company QS placed Boston College fifth in its **world ranking** of theology, divinity, and religious studies programs, just behind the University of Cambridge and ahead of Yale University. ✖ Juniors Akosua Achampong and Christina "Ty" King were **elected** president and executive vice president, respectively, of the

Undergraduate Government of Boston College. They are the first female ticket to lead the organization. A day before the election, Achampong, a double major in English and communication, with a minor in African and African diaspora studies, was named this year's recipient of the University's Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Scholarship, which honors a junior for academic performance, leadership, and a commitment to the ideals of King. ✖ The Boston College Irish Dance troupe took top honors at this year's **Showdown dance competition**. BCID's performance involved a *Star Wars* theme, with white-masked storm troopers led by a high-stepping, black-clad Darth Vader battling a rebel force led by a sword-wielding Princess Leia. The force and the audience were with her.  
—Thomas Cooper



# Battle plans

By David Levin

Securing the cyber world

Cosponsored by the FBI and the Woods College of Advancing Studies' two-year-old master's program in Cybersecurity Policy and Governance (CPG), a March 8 conference on cybersecurity packed Gasson 100 with industry stars. Among those taking part in the meeting were Michael Daly, chief technology officer for cybersecurity and special missions at Raytheon; Paul Cornish, head of RAND Europe's defense, security, and infrastructure research; John Eckenrode, chief security officer for State Street Corporation; Cheryl Davis, director of cybersecurity policy on the White House's National Security Council; and Michael Steinmetz, director of digital risk and security, strategy, and planning for National Grid. There were representatives from the Office of Homeland Security, the Department of Defense, and U.S. Cyber Command.

For the 8:45 A.M. opening of the event, nearly 50 reporters hovered at the perimeter of the room; a dozen TV cameras on tripods clustered together on risers at the back. There was no mistaking the source of their enthusiasm, as a chorus of camera shutters greeted the day's keynote speaker, then-FBI director James Comey. The visit to campus marked one of Comey's first public appearances following Inauguration Day. But any spectator hoping for political commentary would be disappointed, as, stating briskly at the outset, "You're stuck with me for another six and a half years," Comey turned to the issue on the table.

The year 2016 saw hacks of Cisco, Verizon, Oracle, the Democratic National Committee, and the Internal Revenue Service. And it brought announcements of earlier attacks on Yahoo, LinkedIn, and Twitter that had compromised the private information of at least one billion users, Comey noted. "You in the private sector," he said to the executives seated before

him, "are the primary targets of cyber intrusions, because data, innovation, and the money all sit on your efforts. That's where the bad guys go, whether they're a nation state, a hacktivist, or a fraudster."

The majority of intrusions, Comey said, are purposely not reported to the FBI. "We [at the FBI] need to get better and faster at sharing information in appropriate ways," he said, "and we need to build trust between the government and the private sector." He cited the example of ransomware hacks, in which inexpensive software is used to encrypt data and hold it hostage. Such attacks have proliferated at hospitals, many of which, wanting to avoid putting patients' lives at risk, have paid to get their files unlocked.

According to FBI supervisory special agent Timothy Russell, who spoke during a later presentation on cyber threat trends, the FBI in 2016 was tracking 293 ransomware incidences "in the Boston area." In March 2017, he said, "we're already looking to eclipse that number."

THAT AFTERNOON, KEVIN POWERS, an analyst and attorney for the U.S. Department of Justice before coming to Boston College to direct the Woods College program, moderated a cyber-attack simulation. Panelists from Draper Labs, IBM, GuidePoint Security, Boston College information technology, Skybox Security, and the law firm of Mintz Levin were asked to respond to a hypothetical breach. Powers laid out the scenario: "You work for a large company that processes medical bills for hospitals and doctors' offices. . . . You receive a call from one of your customers, saying that, since yesterday, their office has been receiving data that belongs to a different customer. And since this morning, numerous patient files

are no longer available, and their office can't access any of the files that are still online."

In a rapid back-and-forth, the panelists, playing their real-life professional positions at the fictional company, reacted.

Etay Maor, executive security advisor at IBM and for this simulation head of the operations team, had more questions than answers: "I have 60, 80 security systems from 30 different vendors," he said. "What am I allowed or not allowed to do? Maybe I should shut down the server? . . . Are there backups of the medical records? Have we practiced a live restore from backup? This is not an IT problem," he added, "it's a business problem. PR people need to know, board members need to know."

Diana Kelley '87, global executive security advisor for IBM and the fictional company's security response coordinator, said a virtual war room should be set up on a secure server, allowing the response team to share information "on a need-to-know basis. . . . I don't know if somebody attacked us or not, but I know that patient information went to the wrong place. . . . We need to notify our legal team."

Michael Bourque, Boston College vice president and chief information officer, said the group needed to "work from an established incident response plan, so we know who in the organization and which customers to bring into the loop. . . . You don't want to develop your plans when the emergency arises," he said, noting that he "would engage internal counsel right away."

Cynthia Larose, chair of the privacy and security practice at the law firm of Mintz Levin, said, "Give me the facts. Are you engaging with outside security firms? Are we maintaining client engagement? Forensics reports can be discoverable in the class-action suit that follows like night follows day." She added, "If we don't know of any criminal activity going on, there's no need to bring in the police or the FBI. Some of these incidents don't rise to the level of involving law enforcement."

As the panelists offered their first responses, Powers introduced a twist: A few days after the suspected hack, a company laptop is reported stolen from "Gary in accounting."





Comey: "We need to build trust between the government and the private sector."

Kevin Burns, chief information security officer at Draper Labs, jumped in: "The initial question is, what is the data set on that laptop? And was it encrypted? If it's accounting information, it's not as sensitive as medical records."

"I completely agree," Kelley said cautiously. "We still have to see these as two separate issues until we have forensics to tie them together. . . . If we can contain the breach within 90 days, the cost of damages goes down by millions of dollars. It's important that people not talk about this," she said. "Right now, security awareness and training is almost entirely 'don't click on the phishing link,'" she observed. "But what we say and where we say it is really important, too. If you travel a lot, it's surprising, especially on airplanes, what people discuss."

While the rest of the group debated their next steps, Maor shifted impatiently in his seat. "Listening to all these senior

executives . . . I'm panicking. I don't have the privilege of assuming this isn't an incident," he said. "Do you have any idea how much work I have to do to get the information for these guys to make decisions? I have to look into the firewalls, networks, endpoints, mobile devices—and now this idiot has lost his laptop, which *might* be encrypted, and I don't know if the password is taped to the bottom because he forgets it." On average, he said, six months elapse before companies discover a breach.

FOLLOWING THE SIMULATED ATTACK, attendees had the opportunity to join six breakout sessions, on topics such as "Best Business Practices," "Governance, Risk Management, and Compliance," and "Cyber National Security," moderated by Colonel Gary Corn of U.S. Cyber Command.

The CPG program at Boston College is one of a handful at U.S. colleges and

universities—among them Brown and Georgetown—offering on-campus curriculums in cyber security. The 10-course program requires classes such as "Incident Response and Management" and "Cybersecurity Policy: Privacy and Legal Requirements," with electives including "International Cybersecurity" and "Security in the Cloud." The program's faculty draws from Boston College, and, currently, the National Security Agency, U.S. Steel, and PricewaterhouseCoopers. It has an enrollment of 61 students and reflects a Woods College focus on "industry-aligned" executive education, certificate, and master's programs, says dean James P. Burns, IVD. "We want to provide the skills needed for advancement within a field or a shift to a new field," says Burns, "to create thought leaders for industry and propel the students themselves." ■

David Levin is a Boston-based writer.



At a SLAM! competition on April 9 in Cushing 001, Rusty Cosino '19 performs his "Men of Smoke."

## Say the word

By Zachary Jason

Boston College's SLAM! scene

The first-floor commons room in Thomas More Apartments was dark on February 12, save for a string of small white lights on the floor shaped into a heart and strewn with red rose petals, the flicker of a digital fireplace streaming from YouTube on a colossal flat-screen, and a snowblower's headlight that occasionally bobbed into view through the glass doors. A steady snowfall couldn't keep some 60 students from a night of spoken-word poetry.

SLAM! (short for Soul, Love, And Meaning) is an undergraduate poetry club

founded in September 2014 by Haley Kerr '17, an economics major. Its monthly readings and annual competitions each set forth a theme. Tonight, two dozen students would perform original poems in the spoken-word style (think hip-hop or jazz poetry or monologue theater) addressing "Love or Lack Thereof." Kerr and Kellie O'Leary '17, a psychology major, opened the show with a poem they cowrote about a failed relationship called "Farewell to All My Loving." As O'Leary, in a black crop-top and long black skirt, sang the Beatles' "All My Loving" in a soothing soprano,

Kerr, in a black dress and large red bow pinned to the back of her head, shouted over her with pointed attacks such as, "You made me a ghost of myself." Kerr rhymed rapid-fire, gasping audibly between lines (accepted spoken-word technique), shaking her head, hunching forward, and slicing her arm in a stabbing motion for emphasis. As O'Leary came to the end of the song, Kerr turned her back to the audience and whispered, "Farewell my friend." The crowd whooped.

"WITH SPOKEN WORD, YOU DO ALL you can to connect with the audience," Kerr, who talks just as fast when she's not performing, told me after the show. "Your diction is super intentional. But you've also got to perform to convey emotions, yelling, whispering, making your body move." A Connecticut native, Kerr wrote verse in middle school, until one day at 15 she came upon an online video of Austin-

based spoken-word poet Anis Mojgani, a National Book Award nominee, acting out his 2005 poem “Shake the Dust.” She memorized its 660 words that day, and started writing her own spoken word. “The visceral response that it demands, that’s what I love,” she says.

There are no hard guidelines for composing spoken-word, but there are strict rules for competitions (called slams), devised by Poetry Slam, Inc., the non-profit organization that sponsors the National Poetry Slam and the Individual World Poetry Slam: demerits for every 10 seconds a poem exceeds three minutes, no props, and a panel of five judges selected randomly from the audience, who grade both poem and performance. The Valentine’s show at Thomas More, however, wasn’t competitive.

Each performer morphed the mood in the room. One moment the beat was gospel, as freshman Olivia Sorenson, an English and communication major, rose to the tips of her toes and recited “Divine Intervention,” letting fly with the qualities of her God, “the author of an indiscriminate love so perfect yet so unknown,” to the crowd’s chorus of *oh yes* and *mmm*. The next moment, it was jazz. Jude Poku ’17, a psychology major from New Jersey, stood motionless in a gray hooded sweatshirt, clenching the microphone and his notebook as he recited “All Creatures” over muffled synthesizer music he’d composed. The audience adhered to standard spoken-word etiquette. When a poet announced it was his or her debut performance (eight were first-timers), they cheered, “Hey, virgin!” Responding to lines that moved them, they snapped their fingers (clapping during a poem, says Kerr, “disrupts flow”) or hollered, “OK, poet!”

Few of the performers were English majors, and many of the poems, works-in-progress sometimes read from cellphones, were deeply personal. Aaron Anderson ’18, a lean English and pre-med student in a black turtleneck, nearly whispered his poem “Callouses,” a rumination on the weathered features of his father after a long day of manual labor. Chandler Ford, a tall, brawny sophomore in a Fair Isle sweater, recited a reflection on death: “There is no justice without you just as there is no mercy with you.”

Rusty Cosino ’19, a film major who was recording the show for SLAM’s YouTube channel, began with a humorous meditation on coprolite, a form of fossilized feces, but a few lines in lamented an unrequited love interest who worked at a science museum.

THE EARLIEST REFERENCE IN THE *Heights* to student poetry gatherings appears in 1940, when Boston College undergraduates, including future novelist Joseph Dever ’42, joined Harvard’s “invitation only” Poetry Club. In 1966, the University opened a coffeehouse called Middle Earth (on Upper Campus), at which students regularly shared their verse.

Kerr and friends were hosting readings in their common rooms in the fall of 2014, until she registered SLAM! through the Office of Student Involvement, which enabled them to book event spaces. But every Tuesday night SLAM! repeats to its early intimacy when it holds workshops, often in Kerr’s Thomas More apartment. About 20 “Slammy” members regularly attend. One night in March, the group

spent the hour constructively critiquing two students’ performances. Jamila Gordon, a graduate student in the School of Social Work, rehearsed a poem about her family’s generational strife; students suggested she “pause after ‘black bodies’ to let the words marinate in the room,” and “try different voices for you and your grandmother’s character.”

Near the end of the Valentine’s show, SLAM’s vice president Karina Herrera ’17, wearing a black sweater, black jeans, and black boots, told the audience she wrote her poem late the night before, as a dialogue with her absent father. “Yes I go to school,” she yelled. “Who else is going to bring hope into a house of brokenness?” She stomped on the carpet and swatted her arms in sharp arcs. “What kind of man are you that abandons his daughter for the sedative of a bottle?” She stopped herself, and closed her eyes. “I thank him for teaching me in his absence the definition of an independent woman. . . . I don’t love you. And I don’t hate you. I just forgive you.”

Snaps and *mmms* buzzed through the room. ■

## Scorecard: Graduate school rankings

Boston College graduate schools and programs continued their rise in the *U.S. News & World Report* 2018 standings.

### BOSTON COLLEGE LAW SCHOOL

Clinical training **22** | Tax law **20** | Overall **26** (up four places from 2016)

### CARROLL SCHOOL OF MANAGEMENT

Finance **18** | Full-time MBA program **44** (up six places)

### CONNELL SCHOOL OF NURSING

Nursing anesthesia **22** | Master’s program **31** (up two places)

### LYNCH SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

Elementary education **14** | Secondary education **17** | Student counseling and personnel services **10** | Overall **23**

### MORRISSEY COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCES

Economics **25** | English **51** | History **41** | Political science **61** | Psychology **53** | Sociology **42** | Note: The natural sciences were not reviewed this year

### SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK

Programs were not evaluated for 2018. SSW’s most recent ranking was **10**, in 2016.



A faculty and student discussion held on November 17 in Devlin Hall.

# The year of living politically

Since November 8, 2016, schools, departments, and a large number of political, cultural, arts, religious, and social organizations at Boston College have sponsored lectures, conversations, debates, and other public events relating to the election results. The following were among the offerings.

**Reflection on the Election**, November 10, an open meeting sponsored by the Undergraduate Government of Boston College (UGBC). **Letter to the Editor**, the *Heights*, November 12, signed by 281 faculty, encouraging students to engage in civil political conversation. **Infinite Hope: A Post-Election Debrief**, November 13, panel discussion sponsored by Campus Ministry, Black Student Forum, and others. **The New President's To-Do List**, November 14, panel discussion, political science faculty, Campus Activities Board. **Post-Trump Sit Down**, November 15, African and African Diaspora Studies. **Trump Presidency: Likely and Unlikely Policy Changes**, November 16, panel discussion,

Rappaport Center for Law and Public Policy, Law School. **PTSD: The 2016 Election: A Faculty and Student Discussion**, November 17, Civic Engagement Initiative. **Trump, Brexit, and the Future of Politics**, November 17, panel discussion, Clough Center for Constitutional Democracy. **How do we talk about diversity and inclusion in the context of current social tensions and change?** December 6, faculty panel, Division of Student Affairs. **Finding Balance in Unsettling Times**, December 13, lecture and panel discussion, Office for Institutional Diversity. **The Adventure of Civility**, January 24, author Krista Tippet, Lowell Lecture Series. **Healing After a Time of Discord**, January 25–February 15, online course, School of Theology and Ministry's Crossroads program. **The 2016 Electoral College**, January 26, with Massachusetts electors, sponsored by UGBC and Student Affairs. **Women's March Debrief and Action Luncheon**, February 1, Women's Center. **Together We**

**Stand: Silent Solidarity Demonstration**, February 3, O'Neill Plaza, Muslim Student Association, Campus Ministry, and more than 30 other student organizations and administrative and academic offices. **A Conversation on the Immigration Executive Order**, panel discussion featuring Law faculty and students, February 6, Middle Eastern Law Students Association, South Asian Law Students Association, and others. **What's Next in Health Care Reform?** February 6, with former Maryland governor Martin O'Malley and Professor Mary Ann Chirba, Rappaport Center, Law School. **Letter Campaign Supporting People of All Nationalities**, February 6, Mod 22B. **Maintaining Community Throughout Difficult Conversations**, February 23, forum with Student Affairs and Mission and Ministry staff, sponsored by University Libraries and Office of the Provost. **Deepening Catholic Citizenship Today: Drawing from Scripture and Tradition**, March 9, faculty presentation and discussion, School of Theology and Ministry (STM). **Black Lives Matter in the Trump Era**, March 15, panel discussion, African and African Diaspora Studies. **What Now? Having Difficult Conversations in our Community**, March 16, "town hall forum for students," Boisi Center. **Muslim Students and Religious Hospitality at Catholic Institutions: a Roundtable Discussion**, March 20, Center for Human Rights and International Justice, and Muslim Students Association. **Reimagining Refugee Law**, March 29, former UN deputy high commissioner T. Alexander Aleinikoff, sponsored by Clough Center and the Center for Human Rights and International Justice. **The First Three Months of Trump's Presidency**, April 5, panel discussion with political science faculty, sponsored by Campus Activities Board and Eagle Political Society. **The Crisis in Greece and Europe in the Age of Trump**, April 10, former U.S. ambassador to Greece and NATO R. Nicholas Burns '78, IF02, Hellenic Society. **The Ethics of Citizenship in the Trump Era**, April 11, Boisi Center interim director Erik Owens, Boisi Center. **Solidarity with Immigrants**, May 1, interfaith prayer service, STM and Campus Ministry. ■

Research by Alexandra Rae Hunt '17



Same bananas, different music. Which bunch would you choose?

## CLOSE-UP: SOUND'S EFFECTS

BEFORE HE WAS an associate professor of marketing, Henrik Hagtvedt was a successful artist. He'd trained at the Academy of Fine Arts in Florence and his works—thickly painted and striking, in the expressionist vein—were exhibited internationally. Now, Hagtvedt's aesthetic interests extend to "sensory marketing," a field that takes the findings of basic research in cognitive psychology and neuroscience and applies them in the service of advertising, retailing, and other efforts to attract consumers.

Consider, for instance, the fact, well-established in cognitive psychology, that people tend to associate high-pitched sounds with light colors, and low-pitched notes with dark ones. Might it be possible to use this knowledge to steer consumers to a particular product? To test the idea, Hagtvedt teamed up with associate marketing professor S. Adam Brasel, a frequent collaborator who employs eye-tracking and other technologies to study consumer behavior. Together they conducted a series of increasingly elaborate experiments, reported in the August 2016 issue of the *Journal of Marketing Research*.

The first tests were conducted with student subjects in the Carroll School of Management's Marketing Interfaces Lab, which Brasel codirects. Using infrared beams to track the attention paid by subjects to images on a computer screen, and playing high- or low-frequency tones through the computer's speakers, they affirmed the links between high and light, and low and dark, and found them to be automatic: Play a high-pitched tone and the subject will reflexively fix on a light blue box 59 percent of the time; play a low tone and attention will land on a dark blue box, 56 percent of the time.

To test the strength of this reflex, the researchers next introduced a countermanding or mixed signal: telling students in advance to focus on the lighter of two objects, for instance, but playing a low-pitched sound as both images appeared simultaneously on the screen. The result? "Sound frequency [took] precedence" as the cue, they reported, "60 percent of the time."

The final experiment was conducted at a local supermarket. "We decorated one large shelf space for bananas with white

paper and another with black paper," the researchers recount. "No bananas were sold elsewhere in the supermarket [and] the two shelf spaces were side by side." All bananas were the same brand and all shelves were restocked frequently. Two tracks of ambient music (for piano and synthesized strings) were composed and recorded for the project by Brasel's father; they were identical in every respect but pitch. Eighty shoppers were observed in all. The low-frequency music was played for 40 of them; 40 others heard the high-frequency version. By the end of the test, some 60 percent of shoppers had selected their bananas from the color background that matched the music's pitch.

Imagine the potential applications. "For instance, if a store is overstocked with white shirts, . . . high-frequency music could help boost its sales," write Hagtvedt and Brasel. The researchers recently published another article on the influence of color on consumers, titled "Color Saturation Increases Perceived Product Size." Available online, it will appear in the *Journal of Consumer Research's* August 2017 issue.

—Thomas Cooper

# Picture perfect

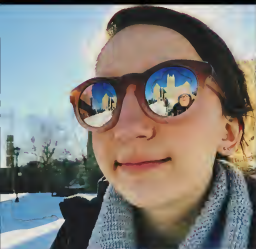
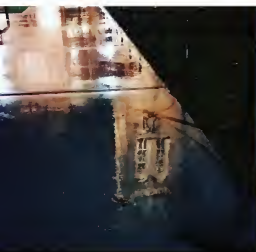
Hashtag Gassongram takes off

Five years ago, Jordan Ball '13 posted on Instagram (then two years old) a photograph of Gasson Hall's east facade backed by billowing white clouds in a deep blue sky. She included the caption, "typical Gasson shot, sorry, needed to be done," and the hashtag #gassongram. The idea caught on, and students, alumni, and visitors to campus have since contributed some 5,800 posts of photos taken in every season at all hours: Gasson dusted by snow, basking in sunsets, touched by a rainbow, flood-lit at night. The 104-year-old granite Collegiate Gothic edifice has been the muse of Halloween pumpkin carvers and ice sculptors and a magnet for selfie-takers. An anonymous text-post effectively sighed: "I want someone to look at me like people look at Gasson."


—Thomas Cooper











Robinette (foreground, left) and Tibbs in the main parlor before Friday night's "symbols of discernment" panel.

# Beco

ON RETREAT WITH 33 STUDENTS, 14 FACULTY AND STAFF, AN  
OLD-SCHOOL VIDEO, AND A SIGNIFICANT FLOOR MOP.  
A REPORT FROM HALFTIME 88



A group of young men are seated in a room with large windows and wooden paneling. They are wearing lanyards and name tags, suggesting a formal or semi-formal event. The man in the foreground, seen from the back, is wearing a dark sweater and glasses, and appears to be speaking or gesturing towards the group. The room has a warm, rustic feel with wooden walls and large windows.

# ming

BY ZACHARY JASON

PHOTOGRAPHS BY LEE PELLEGRINI

F

riday, 5:00 p.m.

On an afternoon in early spring, 33 students sat in silence on a yellow school

bus taking them from Boston College to an 80-acre property in the woods of Dover, Massachusetts, 12 miles west of Gasson Tower. There, in a former family mansion turned Dominican Priory that is now Boston College's Connors Family Retreat and Conference Center, they would spend a weekend participating in the 88th rendition of a retreat called Halftime. Started by the University in 2001, Halftime asks undergraduate students to set aside friends, textbooks, Netflix, and cellphones (most of the time) and focus—for 45 hours—on who they are and who they want to be.

"Halftime isn't an adrenaline rush. Halftime is a plate of broccoli," says Michael Sacco, director of the Center for Student Formation, the office within the Division of University Mission and Ministry that runs the retreat. "What Halftime offers," says Sacco, "is a chance for students to slow down, to really pay attention to their talents and desires, and to break down the pressures they feel about the future." Today's average 18-to-33-year-old American, according to research published in the science journal *PLOS One*, checks his or her phone 85 times a day, an investment of approximately five hours. "This generation wants and needs formally carved out time to disconnect and make meaning of their lives," says Sacco.

Halftime's origins trace to 1999, when the Indianapolis-based Lilly Endowment offered to help liberal arts colleges and universities launch programs for students to "examine the relationship between their faith and vocational choices." A team of some 20 Boston College faculty and administrators, led by Joseph Appleyard, SJ, '53, Ph.L.'58, H'12, then vice president for the division of University Mission and Ministry (founded

in 1998), drafted a proposal that would fund ministry internships; run monthly seminars to educate faculty and staff on the University's Jesuit, Catholic mission; and host retreats at which faculty would speak to students about decisive moments in their own lives and so lead students to consider life decisions they had made and still needed to make. Lilly granted the University \$2 million. The internships and seminars ended within a decade. Halftime, however, lives on. Originally intended for students during the summer between sophomore and junior year—hence Halftime—the retreat now takes place at least twice each semester and is open to all undergraduates. More than 700 faculty and staff have participated to date, along with some 4,000 students.

The students on the bus looked out the windows, carbuds in place, perhaps enduring what Student Formation staff—many not a great deal older than the students—call FOMO (Fear Of Missing Out) on a weekend's worth of campus life. Two registered students never made it to the bus or responded to queries from retreat staff. As frequently happens with overbooked students, a few others had cancelled, to instead attend a popular annual dance competition.

Of those on the bus, nearly half had already participated in one or more of the dozen other Mission and Ministry programs on the Boston College retreat circuit—including



48 Hours (to help freshmen make the transition to college) and Kairos (an exploration of Christian faith). Some had what Sacco calls the "retreat bug." Others told me they hoped Halftime might help them choose a major, or decide on a career. Few students in the schools of management or nursing attend Halftime. "We mostly attract humanities



OPPOSITE: Brian Kusior '19 (in glasses) and Sofia Ribeiro '18, before a panel. ABOVE: Nzinga Moore '17 (with scarf) leads a small group discussion in the main parlor. Taggart (right) was the group's sweep. LEFT: Troxell during her "What brings me joy?" talk on Friday night.

majors, students who don't have clearly scripted paths ahead of them, and want to find a path," says Sacco.

Brian Kusior '19, a soft-spoken, bespectacled music major from upstate New York, told me he was most looking forward to escaping for two days from his "chaotic" nine-man suite. All students at Dover would be upgrading from a twin bed to a queen, from a busy campus to a sprawling, 50,000-square-foot country house in a setting of snow-covered lawns, groves of trees, and a stone-walled garden designed in 1902 by Frederick Law Olmstead and Calvert Vaux.

Halftime is a strongly choreographed dance of conversation, silence, attending, performance, walks in the woods, and meditation, and is centrally designed to foster "vocational discernment," says Sacco. Directed by a carefully selected faculty or staff emcee, and assisted, as needed, by the staff from the Center for Student Formation, student, faculty, and staff participants explore "Three Key Questions" that were conceived by theology professor and award-winning teacher Fr. Michael Himes. What brings me joy? What am I good at? Who does the world need me to be? They also consider the "Three Be's of Jesuit Education," devised by Appleyard. Be attentive, be reflective, be loving. Students participate in 15 meetings over the course of the retreat: 10 plenary, and five within assigned groups of four or five students who are guided by junior and senior students, or leads, one for each group. Each group—there were seven at this Halftime retreat—also includes a faculty or staff member, referred to as a sweep. (The lingo of leads and sweeps comes from hiking.) The lead, says Sacco,

"hacks away the brush, decides where the group goes, asks the questions" (*Who in your life challenges you to be a better version of yourself? What prevents you from giving more of yourself to others?*). The sweep is a "wisdom figure who hikes in the back in case someone twists an ankle or needs company while they walk at a slower pace." Both sweeps and leads serve as volunteers.

Sweeps speak in the small groups, offering encouragement or their own stories when they feel it appropriate. Sometimes they break silences that have grown too long. They also present two panel discussions. They are invited to take part in the retreat by Student Formation staff. Many are repeat visitors. The leads, half of whom are former participants, have trained for two months with Student Formation staff. In addition to working with the small groups, each will speak at one of the plenary meetings, telling a rehearsed eight-minute story of moments of decision in their young lives.

**6:00 P.M.** Students, leads, and sweeps first gathered in their small groups at a dinner in a brightly lit basement dining hall. The conversations around eight oval tables were interrupted by Andrew Basler '12, MA'18, a graduate assistant within Student Formation, who called the room to attention by striking a copper Tibetan singing bowl with a wood mallet.

Basler told students to expect three levels of conversation at Halftime: "Million-Dollar Staircase Small Talk," a reference to a popular nickname for the Higgins Stairs on which students passing one another exchange brief greetings; the "Hillside Café Conversation," deeper but still guarded because others are in earshot; and the "Dorm Room Heart-to-heart," an open and penetrating exchange. "We want you to be in levels two and three throughout Halftime," he told them. Kerry Cronin '87, Ph.D.'15, a Center for Student Formation fellow and a popular theology instructor, has been the emcee of nine Halftime retreats. "Students begin the experience hesitant," she told me. "We're disrupting them, discomfiting them. We're pulling them away from the superficial, shallow way culture pushes them to think about themselves."

The small student groups became acquainted over chicken quesadillas, Spanish rice, and chocolate chip cookies. The group I joined for the weekend stuck to kibitzing about the gen-

Robinette, holding his mop, on his year as a janitor: "The complete bodily investment in what I was doing allowed the deeper senses of what I wanted to do to come to fruition."

erally un-admired housing lottery, the *Gilmore Girls* reboot, and a rumor about a secret tunnel between Gasson and Devlin Hall (in reality, a crawl space containing electrical lines and steam pipes). Four hours later, following three retreat meetings, they'd be sharing personal histories.

The bowl chimed and we regrouped in what had been the estate's main parlor, base camp for the weekend's talks. Thirty-eight feet long and 24 feet wide, the room offers maple floors, oak paneling, framed 19th-century maps, three arched French double doors that lead to a terrace, a fireplace wide enough for a hibernating grizzly, and bookshelves packed with reminders of the house's years as a priory (collections of the ecclesiastical journal *Angelicum*, a Depression-era source of canon law commentary, and of *Review for Religious*, published by the Missouri Province Jesuits). The students sat across three rows of portable chairs, while sweeps and Student Formation staff filled wing chairs against the back wall, and Sacco, who attends almost every Halftime, leaned back in a floral-patterned couch against an expansive bay window, out of the eye range of students or faculty and staff, his usual post.

**7:40 P.M.** Mary Troxell, an animated middle-aged woman who teaches German idealism in the philosophy department, introduced herself as Halftime 88's emcee. She wore jeans, a half-zip fleece, and small hoop earrings. Her amber hair was bobbed. Leaning forward with her hands cupped on the dark-wood lectern in front of the fireplace, she looked like the director of a well-managed summer camp.

She began by posing the first of the Himesian questions:

"What brings me joy?" Troxell grew up, she told the students, in subsidized housing in unincorporated Pompano Highlands, Florida (she maintains a glimmer of an accent). "Embarrassed" by her family's circumstances, she concocted an "escape plan" when she was in middle school: Earn top grades, then a lucrative job, and never return. But as an ambitious undergraduate studying long hours in the library at Amherst College in the late 1980s, Troxell developed a routine. She'd step away from her assigned reading every so often, pick a book at random from the library shelves, read for 15 minutes, then return to her work. "I fell in love with the life of the mind," she told the crowd in the parlor. "That feeling of joy has served as a north star throughout my life." As she would reveal the





following day in her “Be Reflective” talk, it would take her years to make good on what she learned about herself as an undergraduate.

Basler then flicked off the lights, and after a few moments Halftime’s guiding spirit appeared on a projection screen on a tripod at the front of the room. Michael Himes, a priest of the Archdiocese of Brooklyn, is a short, round man in large eyeglasses. In this video, now 16 years old, he is in his early 50s and dressed in a gray wool blazer over a burgundy V-neck sweater over a white shirt and gold necktie. While a Brooklyn native, his accent wobbles back and forth between outerborough and something nearly but not quite British. Over the course of the weekend, he will introduce the “Three Key Questions” in brief videos, beginning with joy.

Himes first distinguishes joy from happiness. The latter can change moment to moment, because happiness is based on many external factors, including “whether breakfast agrees with me.” Joy, however, is a “sense of the genuine rightness of the way in which one lives one’s life.” How do you know what brings you joy? Ask yourself, “What excites you? What are your passions? What are your obsessions?” (Himes pronounces it *obzessions*.) We also shouldn’t conflate joy and satisfaction. Paraphrasing Augustine, Himes says, “Joy is the delight one takes in being dissatisfied,” in constantly “stretching oneself.” Himes looks into the camera and says, “There would be nothing, nothing worse than to come to the end of one’s life, certainly one’s professional life, look back upon it and say, *On the whole, it was dull.*”

Himes began delivering his thoughts on the “Three Key Questions” when he taught at Notre Dame in the 1990s. Burt Howell, a long-time member of the Mission and Ministry staff and a principal designer of Halftime, recruited him for the videos in 2001, just after Himes arrived at Boston College. Howell booked a television studio in Cambridge for four days but, he recalls, Himes delivered three “Michael Jordan” level takes without rehearsal on day one.

Along with Himes’s avuncular charm, the video offers unselfconscious public-access production values—a jaunty ukulele cover of “Somewhere over the Rainbow”; cam-

era lights that reflect off the top of Himes’s balding head and large hexagonal eyeglasses. And then there are the green-screen “special effects”—waterfalls, spider-webs, tornados of words swirling around Himes in rainbow-colored Microsoft WordArt—and the anachronisms, as Himes bemoans students “who walk about with their Walkmen.”



But against the dared backdrop, Himes delivers a pointed, serious, and nondenominational homily that continues to touch students. Vocation is about more than career, he says. It also encompasses the vitality and purpose of one’s relationships, community involvement, selflessness. He concludes, “The only time your vocation is settled is when you



are perfectly settled. And that will probably happen about a quarter of an hour after they seal the casket.”

**9:15 P.M.** Everyone returned from their small group discussions. As students took their seats in the parlor, the seven sweeps faced them in the front, seated with their backs to the fireplace. Most held “symbols of discernment,” objects they’d been asked to bring that tied to moments when they were required to make important life decisions.

The objects were: a journal with a red and white polka dot cover, a bound undergraduate thesis from 1988 entitled “The Workers and Their World,” a lime green Beanie Babies frog, a mop, a red toy motorcycle, an “I Voted” sticker, and a ballpoint pen marked with the Boston College seal. Holding these objects, the faculty and staff sweeps—ages 27 to 70—

Basler told students to expect three levels of conversation: “Million-Dollar Staircase Small Talk”; the “Hillside Café Conversation,” deeper but still guarded; and the “Dorm Room Heart-to-heart.”

looked like the world’s least likely improv comedy troupe.

From left to right (Sacco deliberately ordered them based on the subjects of their talks), they were assistant director of the Women’s Center Rachel DiBella, MSW’14, a cerebral, warm, careful speaker who looked no older than the senior leads; University provost David Quigley, a historian who would soon thread his presentation with lines from Whitman, Dorothy Day, and Dostoyevsky; residential life

assistant director Dorrie Siqueiros, MA’09, in a zip-up sweater vest, who came to the University as the resident director of Voute and Gabelli Hall in 2009; director of capital planning and engineering Bill Tibbs, a tall, 60-ish African-American with a prodigious mustache, who joined Boston College in 2008; associate professor of theology Brian Robinette, graced with a curly, professorial mullet, who has taught Christian theology at Boston College since 2012; PULSE program assistant Joane Etienne, a young Haitian-American in purple-framed glasses who

OPPOSITE, TOP: Ellen Hill ’17, a lead, delivers a talk on “Be more.”

OPPOSITE, BOTTOM: Sunday breakfast in the basement dining hall.

BELOW: Students journal in the main parlor on Sunday afternoon.



more than any other sweep seemed to treat the students as peers; and finance professor Robert Taggart, a grandfatherly storyteller and purveyor of self-deprecating one-liners who has taught in the Carroll School since 1989. Weeks earlier, Sacco had emailed them this prompt: "Think of a moment in your life when you had enough courage to make a tough decision, and despite doubts, fears, and pressure, it was the best decision for you. Find something you can hold in your hand to symbolize that time." As Kerry Cronin told me, "Students, especially sophomores, feel like so many aspects of their lives—friendships, family, career—hang in the balance. They are *craving* for adults to open up about moments in their lives when they weren't sure if it would all work out."

Bill Tibbs, for whom this was a first Halftime retreat, recounted the day he told his mother he was gay. He was 37, and had been living with his partner (now husband) for 15 years. He'd decided to tell her while on a visit to her home outside Washington, D.C. "I didn't tell her during breakfast, or during her soap operas, or during lunch, or during her game shows," he said. When he finally spoke at the living-room sofa before dinner, his mother answered, "I know. I was just waiting until you were ready and felt comfortable enough to tell me." Soon after, he began to tell coworkers. "To live a whole life, you have to bring your whole self," he said.

Joane Etienne, the youngest sweep, also on her first Halftime retreat, talked about finding herself pregnant at age 17, soon after she had split up with the baby's father, her boyfriend. Her parents were devastated. ("Looking back, [it was] probably not the best idea to break the news on my dad's birthday.") She graduated from high school on time, and then gave birth to her child. Her parents eventually made peace, and helped raise her son while she attended the University of Massachusetts in Boston. In her hands she cupped a toy motorcycle. "There's nothing my son loves more than motorcycles and cars," she said. As she told her story, she leaned back and rubbed her bulbous stomach; her second child was due in less than three weeks. In the back row, sitting with staff, her husband wiped away tears with the sleeve of his sweatshirt. (Elias Etienne was born on April 10.)

Robinette, another first-timer, held a

Robinette thought  
a year of physical  
labor might give him  
the time to consider  
his future. A male  
student asked, What  
went through your  
head as you mopped?

floor mop. After studying literature at Belmont University, an ecumenical Christian college in Nashville, Robinette worked at an advertising agency, preparing for a management position and feeling "miserable" over what, for him, was unfulfilling work. One day he told his wife that he planned to leave the agency. "There's still a dispute about whether she threw the lamp or it dropped," he added. Either way, the wedding gift shattered as she yelled, "I guess we won't be needing nice things!" The Indiana native thought a year of physical labor might give him the time to consider his future. He started calling churches, asking if they needed a janitor. An Episcopal church hired him. His favorite task was mopping floors on Friday afternoons, when the halls were empty. "The rhythm of my entire body, the sound of swishing, the satisfaction in the clean floor."

A male student asked, What went through your head as you mopped?

Nothing, said Robinette. That was the point. "The complete bodily investment in what I was doing allowed the deeper senses of what I wanted to do to come to fruition." At the end of the year he applied to master's programs in theology. He earned his doctorate at Notre Dame in 2003.

Robinette's story seemed to resonate strongly with the students, many of whom were no doubt contemplating corporate careers and perhaps wondering how their souls would find nourishment in the executive suite. For the remainder of the retreat, students sought out Robinette in free moments, asking him about courses he would be teaching and whether

BELOW: Tibbs (right) in conversation with his small group in the Garden Terrace Room. OPPOSITE: Students wander in the Lower Garden during free time on Saturday.





he thought they should take a year away from studies before beginning graduate school.

"The secret of Halftime is that it's as much for faculty and staff's benefit as it is for the students," Sacco said. Undergraduates "bifurcate their social and academic lives." During Halftime, faculty glimpse some of the social pressures and stresses endured by "the sharp, scholarly students they see in their classrooms." Many faculty sweeps admit the experience has made them more empathetic in their teaching. By the same token, as faculty reveal themselves, "students see them more as humans." One male student said to me, "It's comforting to know faculty members were just as lost as us back in their day."

After briefly sharing their own symbols of discernment within their small groups, most students retired for the night; a handful made popcorn in the snack room or played Monopoly in the game room until after midnight.

**F**or the first two-thirds of the 20th century, the undergraduate men of Boston College attended annual, mandatory, three-day retreats on campus, most often in St. Mary's Hall, the Jesuit residence. A typical day's schedule: Mass, instruction, rosary, instruction, benediction, instruction. Typical instruction resembled that proffered by professor of logic Ignatius W. Cox, SJ, at the senior retreat of 1927. As reported in the *Heights*, Cox posed his own Three Questions: "Where did I come from? What am I doing here? Whither am I going?" Upon these "rest our eternal salvation, contrast[ed] with the pagan denial of God and future life."

In November 1965, a month before the close of the Second Vatican Council, the University dropped the retreat requirement. George Drury, SJ, director of "student personnel services," issued a statement saying the University was confident that the curriculum sufficiently cultivated students' "spiritual growth." For the next 25 years, students attended

sporadic, voluntary retreats.

Then retreat culture bloomed in American Catholic educational institutions. In 1993, Mission and Ministry's First-Year Experience office began 48Hours, a retreat to help "ease the transition" for freshmen from high school to college. Between 600 and 1,100 first-year students continue to participate each year. Around the same time, Kairos retreats began to proliferate in Jesuit high schools across the country. Centered on three days of peer-led conversation about "understanding God's role" in one's life, Kairos is now a graduation requirement at many Jesuit high schools. In April 1997, Kelly Muldoon '99, a studio art major, organized the first Kairos retreat at Boston College. Today

Campus Ministry sponsors a dozen Kairos retreats a year, each attended by some 60 students.

Campus Ministry hosts six other faith-based retreats, variously focused on such topics as “God’s unconditional love,” the Ignatian *Spiritual Exercises*, Lent, and issues related to freshman and senior life. Other retreats, begun by the Center for Student Formation, focus on race, on sexual orientation, and, through programs such as the Freshmen League (for men) and Ascend (for women), on the freshman experience.

Undergraduate sign-ups for a retreat of some kind total 3,000 annually, with 250 in Halftime alone. Students, says Sacco in reference to Halftime and other retreats that are not explicitly religious, “curate, edit, and manipulate their online selves continuously. Retreats tap into their desire to explore their *authentic* selves. They also simply want a chance to withdraw for a few days.”

**Saturday, 10:00 A.M.** The Pavlovian bowl chimed, and Halftime 88 participants shuffled from the breakfast buffet to the main parlor. Fr. Himes greeted us from the projection screen and addressed question two: What am I good at? It’s not enough for a vocation to bring joy, says Himes, we must also *excel* at it. “Say there’s absolutely nothing I enjoy more than chopping off the top of a skull and getting my fingers into the old gray stuff.” As he says this, Himes dips his hands into a cartoon brain. “But if all of my patients end up *veg-e-tables*, that’s a very good indication that I am not a brain surgeon by vocation.” To discern our talents, “we must have a genuine openness to other people’s suggestions; they are better than us at discerning what we’re good at.”

Afterward, students sprawled out on the parlor’s Oriental rug for the first of two silent journaling sessions. Some doodled, others reflected on what they’d heard from faculty and staff presenters: “Your monastery is in your heart” (Robinette, quoting his spiritual mentor). “The way forward is often by going back to your past self” (David Quigley). “All wisdom comes through suffering, and no man willingly becomes wise” (Troxell, quoting Aeschylus). “Don’t judge

your insides by other people’s outsides” (Troxell, quoting her mother).

Basler’s bowl rang, signaling an afternoon of free time. A few students approached sweeps for one-on-one conversations in two of the first-floor parlors. Others walked through the snowy woods to the Charles River. Eight sat on the staircase beside the main entrance, extending their small-group discussions. The rest continued to journal, or returned to their rooms.



ABOVE: Hill writes in her journal in the Connors Center’s chapel.  
OPPOSITE, TOP: Caz Novak ’17, a lead, on Sunday afternoon.  
OPPOSITE, BOTTOM: Sophia He ’19 in a small group discussion.

**6:00 P.M.** Back in the main parlor, Troxell delivered her most moving speech of the weekend. When she graduated from Amherst in 1988, she said, she had a degree in English and philosophy, identified herself as a “Marxist feminist,” and accepted a job at a bank. “If I was reflective I would have realized I didn’t belong in finance,” she said. A year or so into her role as a loan officer, a sickly older man entered her office. He lived in public housing, and was dying, he said, and he wanted a \$200 loan. He wanted the money to buy a suit in which he could be buried. Troxell couldn’t help—the minimum loan was \$3,000, and she feared she’d be fired if she wrote him a personal check and sent him away. She spent two hours with the man, calling local nonprofits to see if they could assist, with no luck. When the man left, Troxell’s manager berated her for wasting the bank’s time. “That’s when I gave up on becoming a Marxist feminist banker.”

But she stayed at the bank, for five years. “I began to think that’s what it meant to be a grownup: to dread your job every day.” She imagined her soul as a skyscraper, once aglow from ground to spire, a few windows going dark every day, ever dimming. (This metaphor struck students, who would bring it up later in the weekend. “So vivid, so visual, so horrifying,” one young woman said.)

“I’ve never felt older in my life than I did when I was 26,” said Troxell. It was at that point, nearly five years into the job, that a friend asked her, *Who the hell are you?*

Troxell’s parents balked when she told them she had applied to doctoral programs in philosophy. “When you’re 13 and you disagree with your parents,” she said, “your parents are right almost 100 percent of the time. But when you get to your twenties, it flips. But the moral here isn’t don’t be a banker. The moral is take the time to realize what’s right for you.”

The students returned to their groups to spend an hour talking about what was right for them.



**Saturday, 7:40 P.M.** After dinner, the sweeps again sat with their backs to the fireplace. They were more relaxed than they had been the night before. Tonight their job was merely to recite a passage of less than 200 words that had at some point inspired or comforted them. Rachel DiBella read a Derek Walcott poem she recites for students in crisis: “You will love again the stranger who was your self. / Give wine. Give bread. Give back your heart / to itself, to the stranger who has loved you.” Robinette referenced a passage in Thomas Merton’s *Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander* that began, “At the center of our being is a point of nothingness which is untouched by sin and by illusion.” He reflected, “In the project of forging a self we’re pressured to believe our true self is a kind of *thing*, or a particular *role*. But we’ll feel a sense of restlessness with this belief, until we deeply relax in the central mystery of just *being* anything at all.”

Dorrie Siqueiros offered seven words: “Venti Iced Americano with Sugar Free Vanilla,” her Starbucks order. At least once a week she meets close friends for coffee at 6:00 A.M. “The older you get, the busier you get, the harder it is to make friends,” Siqueiros told the students.





**Saturday, 9:00 P.M.** The students gathered in the chapel for a “conversation partners” activity. They sat in concentric circles, each student facing another, each holding 10 personal photographs they’d brought to the retreat. For an hour, a student lead called out prompts every five minutes: *If you could relive any of these moments, which one would it be and why? Which photo represents what you value most in life? What would you change about a certain photo?*

Meanwhile, sweeps and Student Formation staff gathered in a parlor on the second floor. They sat in lounge chairs and on sofas, drinking craft beer, pinot noir, or vodka-tonics, paying no attention to the March Madness game on the television, talking and joking. Some batted ideas for reshaping the theology core, bolstering the Women’s Center, and renaming course titles to attract Millennials. When the last of us shuffled to our rooms shortly after 1:00 A.M., the halls were silent. Tonight the faculty outlasted the students.

**Sunday, 10:00 A.M.** Back in the parlor, Fr. Himes returned to pose the most difficult question of his triad: “Who does the world need me to be?”

“Many of us live our lives as if we were the stars of a motion picture in which we have the lead role,” said Himes. At that, a trumpet blasted, and the title card for *Himes: The Movie* swept across the screen, trailing *Star Wars* graphics and music. “One of the most difficult things to do is to arrive at the wisdom which perceives other people as *other people*, not simply as role players in my world.” This wisdom is crucial because vocation is also a “self gift, a way of serving others,” which Aquinas called the “crown and summit of the whole of ethical life.” Even if one is talented and finds joy in a certain role—an “extraordinarily accomplished shepherd,” posited Himes—if that ambition doesn’t serve “the needs of the community in which one finds oneself” (say, New York City), then “it’s not one’s vocation.” A truly discerning person “listens and responds to what people around you most desire, hope for, and require . . . even if our attempt to respond may not be appreciated.”

He concludes: “Our deepest and most fundamental vocation is to be a *yooman* being. By which I mean we are called to be as intelligent, as responsible, as free, as courageous, as imaginative, as loving as we can possibly be.”

Reflecting on the challenges of this

Following her junior year, Joseph interned at a global management consultancy. “Excel spreadsheets didn’t bring me joy. But being able to buy 3D tickets to *Ice Age* for my little brother did.”

final question, Tabitha Joseph ’17, a management, leadership, and music major from New Rochelle, New York, stood before the fireplace as a lead and said that during her first semester at Boston College, when the professor in her business ethics seminar asked who might be interested in consulting after graduation, she was the only student not to raise a hand. I had watched Joseph rehearse her presentation a

week earlier in front of the other leads. She had rushed and her voice had quivered. Now she slowly paced back and forth, locking onto the students with her large, brown eyes.

Joseph said that the day after she arrived on campus, her mother lost her job as a nurse’s aid. She babysat before class three mornings a week for two years and gave the earnings to her mother. Following her junior year, she interned at a global management consultancy. “Excel spreadsheets didn’t bring me joy. But being able to buy 3D tickets to *Ice Age* for my little brother did.” When the consultancy offered her a job, she hesitated; she’d much prefer to work for a nonprofit with a social justice mission. As she weighed her decision last October, a hurricane destroyed the houses of her grandmother and two aunts in Haiti.

An unnamed professor convinced Joseph that through the job she’d acquire the experience she’d need to suc-

BELOW: Etienne (left) and Quigley, during the “200 words” panel discussion. OPPOSITE: A door to an interior wall in the first-floor Dover Parlor, inscribed by students from past Halftime and Kairos retreats. Students now leave their mark on a poster board affixed to the wall.





ceed in other professional areas closer to her heart. In the meantime, Joseph intends to help provide for her mother and her extended family. "Signing the job offer didn't quell my anxieties. But if this job can make me a more supportive daughter, sister, niece, that brings me joy, and for now, that's what the world needs me to be."

**11:15 A.M.** We met in our small groups one last time, to reflect on what we'd take back to campus. In my group we learned that one student had called her parents the previous evening to say she was no longer sure she wanted to major in finance. It hadn't gone well, she confessed, but she

was relieved she'd had the conversation. Others said they planned to continue talking with faculty and staff sweeps, and to reach out to their professors about "decisions they faced at our age." Most of the 45 minutes, however, filled up with silence, as though the students were no longer occupied with the retreat but with all that awaited them when they returned in a few hours to what they thought of as their real lives. The lead jotted down phone numbers, saying she'd arrange a follow-up meeting back on campus.

**O**n the surveys issued at the conclusion of each Halftime, 98 percent of participants report the retreat was "very much worth my time," and students consistently rate the sweeps' symbol of discernment panel above all other weekend's events. They say that Halftime has left them feeling "more balanced," that it helped them understand the error of making vocational decisions alone, that vocation means more than career, and that they feel more eager to reach out to faculty and staff. "In the best case scenario," Burt Howell said, "a student returns from Halftime feeling restless." Howell hopes that students seek out the conversation partners they met on Halftime; that they revisit the Himes questions on occasion.

But the truth is that while Howell and Sacco know of individual students who've made prudent (and sometimes imprudent) changes in their lives as a

consequence of the Halftime experience, they don't know what long-term affect the weekend generally has. Like any other retreat, conference, exhibition, symposium, or course that a university designs for its students, Halftime is in the end a dense concentration of ideas, advice, associations, wisdom, jokes, turns of phrase, and stories from which students will draw what they want or need to know. It does not dismay Halftime's leaders, as it does not dismay any seasoned educator, that they can't know the results of their effort immediately or, in many cases, ever. What they can see from their perches at the edges of the Connors Center parlor is what transpires in the moment. And that's enough for the moment. ■



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J. Donald Monan, SJ  
(1924–2017)

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# Commitment

## A LIFE IN FULL

BY BEN BIRNBAUM

Rev. J. Donald Monan, SJ, died on the morning of March 18 at the Campion Health Center, a Jesuit facility in Weston, Massachusetts, following a long, slow physical decline. He was 92, and his last days were spent in the company of family, close friends, and brother priests. A teacher, philosopher, civic leader, and the longest-serving president in the history of Boston College—1972 to 1996—Monan had long been credited with leading the University out of a deep crisis of finance and spirit and to national prominence [see pages 32 and 38]. At the time of his death, he was the University's inaugural Chancellor, an honorific he'd been awarded when he stepped down from the presidency.

"Fr. Monan devoted more than four decades of his life to Boston College, playing a decisive role in its reorganization and increased recognition in American higher education,"

said his successor, President William P. Leahy, SJ. "He has left a lasting legacy, and earned the gratitude and respect of the entire Boston College community."

Known as Don to his intimates, JDM to generations of University memo writers and readers, and Fr. Monan to the rest of the world, James Donald Monan was born on December 31, 1924, in the town of Blasdell, New York, population circa 1,500, some 10 miles south of Buffalo. His father, Edward, was a superintendent of bridges and tunnels with the New York Central Railroad. (Buffalo was a nexus for the NYCR, and there were 10 train depots in Blasdell alone when Monan was a boy.) Monan's mother, Mary (Ward), kept house, looking after Donald—a name he self-selected over James when he was still in grade school, according to family lore—and his siblings Edward Jr. and Gertrude, five and four years older than their brother, respectively.



Monan, at a May 1996 event in Conte Forum marking his retirement.

The children were raised within a close extended family. Edward Monan Sr. was one of nine children whose parents had emigrated from the rural Ards Peninsula, in Northern Ireland's County Down, in 1870, prospering as grocers in Buffalo's Irish First Ward. Monan recalled in a 2009 interview that his American family was fond of singing—Monan himself was a deft tenor—and of storytelling, and often talked about life in “Portaferry.” Monan later came to know and cherish Portaferry and its environs, which he visited following completion of doctoral studies in Europe in the late 1950s. “One of the most moving experiences of my life,” he said of his first glimpse of the Monan family farm on a spit of green land overlooking the Irish Sea. He developed and for all his life maintained friendships with relatives who remained in Ireland.

Don Monan was first educated in Our Mother of Good

Counsel parish school, in Blasdel, staffed by the Sisters of St. Joseph. He recalled that there were fewer than half a dozen students in his grade, and that three rooms sufficed to house eight classes. But, he said, “We were wonderfully trained.” As with other promising Catholic boys of his generation (and of generations ranging back to the late 16th century), Monan was ushered into a world far wider than his birthplace courtesy of the Society of Jesus, first via a scholarship proffered by Canisius High School, in Buffalo. Fond of sports all his life, Monan played goalie on Canisius's ice hockey team or, as he termed it, “Canisius's championship ice hockey team.” In the summer of 1942, at age 17, shortly after graduating from high school, he determined to enter the Society of Jesus. He had been offered a college scholarship and was considering becoming a teacher or doctor. He joined the Society, he once said, because “I was so impressed

with the work of the Jesuits who taught us [at Canisius High School] and with the life they led.”

Jesuit studies took him first to St. Andrew-on-Hudson, a novitiate near Poughkeepsie, New York, and then to Woodstock College, some 20 miles west of Baltimore. Woodstock was the oldest Jesuit seminary in the United States and the “leading Catholic seminary” of the time, according to the *New York Times*. Monan earned bachelor’s, philosophy, and theology degrees there and was ordained in 1955. Among his teachers was John Courtney Murray, SJ, the most eminent American Catholic theologian of the mid-century, whose work focused on finding compatibility between the tenets of democratic pluralism and those of Catholicism, and who would be called upon to help draft *Dignitas Humanae*,

the Second Vatican Council’s revolutionary “Declaration on Religious Freedom.” Another of the young Monan’s teachers was Gustave Weigel, SJ, a noted ecumenist and pioneer in interreligious dialogue. Monan also worked as a driver for Murray and was on the staff of *Theological Studies*, a leading Jesuit journal that Murray edited. While Monan, regrettably, is not known to have written about his years in Woodstock, he spoke of Murray and Weigel as important influences. In his book *Echoes of a University Presidency: Selected Speeches* (Linden Lane Press, 2008), Monan cited counsel he’d received from Weigel when he was a doctoral student in philosophy. “If you study philosophy solely for its apostolic value to you as a priest,” Weigel wrote in a letter, “it will make you a poor philosopher and a poor apostle; if

you study philosophy for its own intellectual validity, you will have the possibility of being a respectable philosopher and being more effective in your ministry as a Jesuit priest.” Monan adopted that counsel wholeheartedly. In many talks over the years to Boston College faculty, he referred to sound academic work as an essential contribution not merely to a particular science or art but to the University’s Jesuit mission.

Fr. Monan earned his doctorate at the Catholic University of Louvain, in Belgium, in 1959. His dissertation, which focused on the development of Aristotle’s idea of ethics, was titled “The Doctrine of Moral Knowledge in Aristotle’s, Protrepticus, Eudemian and Nichomachean Ethics.” While in Europe, Monan studied for a year at Oxford, and for another year divided his time between the universities of Paris and Munich. He returned to the United States in 1960 to take up a position as a philosophy instructor at Le Moyne College, in Syracuse, New York. Founded in 1946, Le Moyne was a very young institution, and Monan’s gifts for administration were noted and recognized with a rush of appointments. Within a year he’d been named chairman of his department and a trustee of the college. He was named to lead Le Moyne’s honors program the following year. He served on the college’s Budget Committee, Academic Senate, President’s Advisory Council, and Student Life Council. He was appointed a higher-education consultant to the New York Provincial in 1966,



Monan as a novice, with his brother, Edward Jr., and father, Edward, circa 1943.

and named a trustee of Fordham University in 1969.

In 1968, Monan accepted his first full-time, senior administrative job—as Le Moyne's academic dean—while Oxford University published his dissertation under the title *Moral Theology and its Methodology in Aristotle*. Though long out of print, the book is still cited on occasion in studies of Aristotle. The famous and famously acerbic Duke University theologian Stanley Hauerwas, in his 1994 book *Character and the Christian Life*, found Monan's philosophical ideas attractive (though he cautioned the author—by then a 22-year president of Boston College—that he was no historian). An essay-length appreciation of the book appeared only four years ago in the *Review of Metaphysics*. Whether or not Monan was aware of these attentions, I don't know. I do know that he was amused and pleased more recently when he was told that *Moral Theology* occasionally turned up on eBay, and that it was priced a good deal higher than the five dollars for which it sold when it was first issued.

During the four years between 1968 and his departure for Boston College, Fr. Monan served in quick succession as Le Moyne's academic dean, academic vice president, and acting president.

In the early summer of 1972, just as Boston College was launching its search for a president, Monan gave up the Le Moyne acting presidency and set out on a sabbatical—a season of golf to be followed by a season of research—from which he expected to return to his career as a teacher and scholar. But neither the sabbatical nor the academic position came to fruition. Shortly after he left Le Moyne, Monan was contacted by a Jesuit friend who asked him if he'd interview for Boston College's position. Monan was reluctant. "I told him," Monan recalled, "that four years as academic dean and vice president had convinced me that I much preferred teaching and writing." But his friend persevered.

A long-shot for the post, Monan was part of a second group of Jesuits considered for the job after a first group failed to result in an appointment. (The job was offered to at least one of those candidates, a Jesuit of the California province, who declined the appointment.) Monan, perhaps the least well-known among the second group of candidates—he was in one search committee memo referred to as "John Monan"—emerged from his interview as a front-runner for the leadership of a university that had been bruised for years by financial, political, public relations, and organizational blunders. "A very intelligent man who has a high capability to apply his talents to analyze practical situations and develop solutions," read what may

Monan was reluctant to  
interview at Boston College.

"Four years as academic  
dean and vice president had  
convinced me that  
I much preferred teaching  
and writing," he said.

have been the most important of a score of laudatory judgments that appeared in a report of an interview with Monan. On August 4, 1972, the all-Jesuit Board of Trustees unanimously voted to appoint him president as of September 1, pending the results of a physical. (His slim build had caused the board some concern.)

What the slim man accomplished as president of Boston College is the subject of the stories that follow. The University, however, was hardly his only commitment. Over the course of his four and a half decades in Boston he served as a trustee or director of more than a score of foundations, corporations, and organizations. These ranged from the National Association of Independent Colleges and Universities to the Bank of Boston to the WGBH Educational Foundation. He also was appointed to a similar number of committees that assisted such organizations as Massachusetts General Hospital, Harvard University, the NCAA, the Massachusetts Foundation for the Humanities, the Peter F. Drucker Foundation, and the National Leadership Roundtable on Church Management. He was the recipient of 13 honorary degrees and numerous awards, including the Theodore M. Hesburgh, CSC, Award from the Association of Catholic Colleges and Universities, and the Distinguished American Award from the National Football Foundation and Hall of Fame. At the time of his death, he remained a member of the Metaphysical Society of America, the Jesuit Philosophical Association, the Society of Ancient Greek Philosophy, and the Society of Phenomenology and Existential Philosophy.

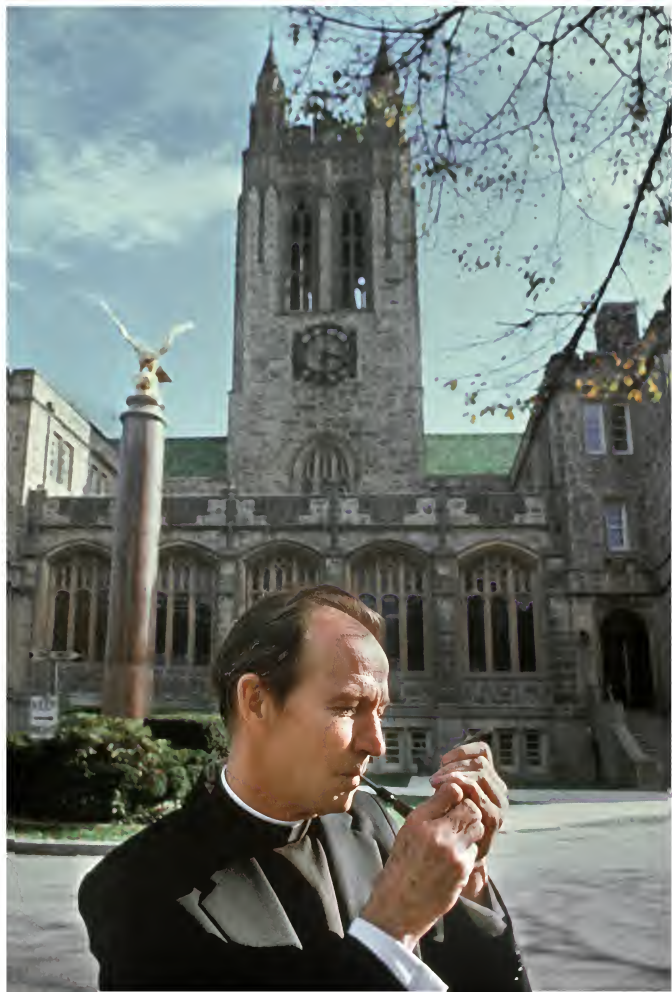
Once asked whether, upon reviewing Boston College's circumstances in 1972 he'd seen the work of reviving the institution as "impossible," Fr. Monan replied, "I saw it as being very, very difficult. And I wasn't quite sure whether the task could be managed. But I certainly knew that it was worth the effort."

In 2011, Fr. Monan was honored by the New England Province of the Society of Jesus with its *Ad Majorem Dei Gloriam* Award—for the Greater Glory of God. ■

*Editor's Note: Fr. Monan is survived by nephews Patrick, Edward, and Michael Monan, Kevin Cheeley, and Anthony J. Bellia Jr.; nieces Margaret Monan Finnegan and Kathryn DeSprit; and cousin Cynthia L. Egan. He was predeceased by his parents, Edward and Mary Ward Monan; his brother, Edward Jr.; his sister, Gertrude Cheeley; and his niece Maureen Bellia.*



A full obituary of J. Donald Monan, SJ, and a selection of photographs, can be found in Full Story at [bc.edu/bcm](http://bc.edu/bcm).



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J. Donald Monan, SJ  
(1924–2017)

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# Architect

## WHAT MONAN BUILT

BY JAMES M. O'TOOLE

The 1960s were not a good time to be a college president. Normally placid campuses, which outsiders might think of as calm preserves of quiet contemplation punctuated occasionally by harmless high jinks, had become sites of turmoil and even violence. The toll this new era of strife took was apparent everywhere. Long-time presidents at the University of Chicago and at Columbia were driven from office amid controversies over the expansion of their institutions into surrounding neighborhoods. The president of Cornell stepped down after only six years following a building takeover by students, some of whom were photographed carrying rifles. Clark Kerr, the highly respected leader of the University of California sys-

tem, had become an issue in Ronald Reagan's campaign for governor, and when Reagan was elected, Kerr quipped that he was "fired with enthusiasm." Harvard's Nathan Pusey cut short his tenure after having to call in city and state police to end a sit-in at his office. And most terribly of all, the president of Kent State University in Ohio, who had ambitiously put up new buildings, enhanced the school's research profile, and established an honors college, decided to retire after four students were shot and killed by National Guardsmen during an anti-war protest on the campus.

Apart from dramatic episodes of this kind, turnover was still the watchword for college and university presidents, and transitions might cluster together, coincidences evident to even casual readers of the newspapers. So it was in eastern Massachusetts with the opening of the school year in September 1972. "New Leaders Tackle Woes of Academia," the

Photographed on Linden Lane for an October 12, 1982, *New York Times* article about his 10th anniversary as president.

headline in the *Boston Globe* said one morning, providing short biographies of five new presidents, each of whom was taking command at a local institution. Brandeis, Wellesley, Radcliffe, and what was then known as Southeastern Massachusetts University (the University of Massachusetts, Dartmouth today) were all under new management, and so was Boston College. The newcomers bravely professed to be looking forward to their responsibilities, and they had the advantage of relative youth. Marver Bernstein of Brandeis was the oldest at 52, Matina Horner at Radcliffe the youngest at just 32. James Donald Monan, SJ (he never used his first name), was 48, and he was coming from the position of academic dean and vice president at Le Moyne College in Syracuse, New York.

Internal Jesuit dynamics—New York and New England were separate “provinces,” whose members stayed mostly on their own side of the border—had limited the time that Monan had ever previously spent on the campus he was now expected to lead. And from the beginning, his inbox was full. Like so many other institutions, Boston College was in the midst of multiple transitions, some of them tur-

**A student strike prompted by a proposed rise in tuition shut down classes for part of a semester two years before Monan arrived.**

**Decades of construction had left deficits and longer term debts.**

**The University, one faculty member said, ran like a mom-and-pop grocery store.**

bulent, and the immediate past had offered reasons enough for pessimism. A general student strike, prompted by a proposed sharp rise in tuition, had shut down classes for the better part of a semester two years before. Several decades of construction (new dormitories and classroom buildings) had left both specific project deficits and longer-term debts. The University, one faculty member said, had been run like a mom-and-pop grocery

store: Money came in and money went out, but it was hard to gauge overall institutional health, or even solvency. Regular alumni giving and other forms of outside support were anemic, and efforts to improve were impeded by near-constant staff changes. “A different face comes through the door every time,” a sympathetic potential donor complained.

Still, the school was turning in some new directions, and these gave signs of hope. Under Monan’s predecessor, W. Seavey Joyce, SJ, the crucial decision had been made to admit women, previously confined to only certain programs, to all the schools of the University, thereby doubling the pool of potential applicants overnight. Without abandoning its traditional connection to the greater Boston area, the

University had also begun to attract better students from farther away, and the faculty too was improving in quality. Possession of the terminal degree in the appropriate field, a kind of luxury in the past, was now required for the hiring and retention of teachers. Once, the trustees had all been Jesuits, meeting rarely to fulfill minimal legal requirements, but now an expanded board, mostly lay men and women with extensive ties in business, education, and public life, was being put in place. They brought new levels of professional advice and support to bear on the institution’s management. After the rocky times, things were stabilizing. But would mere stability be enough? The real challenge for the new president was not survival, but whether the institution would grow into something greater. For J. Donald Monan, that question had a clear answer.

Though by training a philosopher (a distinguished one at that, specializing in Aristotle), Monan’s recent career had pre-



In his office at Botolph House in the early 1980s.





On the Dustbowl with students in the late 1970s.

pared him for his new role. He had helped ride out student unrest on the smaller Le Moyne campus, winning praise for his ability to listen to contending interests, and he had played a leading part in developing cooperative programs with other colleges and universities in upstate New York. At a time when expanding access to higher education to previously overlooked groups was a subject of common discussion, he had explored the idea of “universities without walls.” He had the right kind of personality, too. A former colleague had described him as “his own man in the very best sense,” certain to give Boston College and its potentials “a fresh reading.”

The reading began by taking stock of the situation he was walking into and laying out the steps that would follow. “I had had enough experience at every level of university life,” he recalled later, to recognize the challenge Boston College faced, and “enough enterprise to allow me to undertake it.” To that end, he immediately formed a University Academic Planning Council to set the course for the future. The very idea of long-range planning was relatively new at Boston College, as indeed it was on most campuses. At the time, many would even have wondered whether that kind of stra-

tegic thinking was necessary. Universities just did what they did, didn’t they? Students came, classes were taught, graduations were held, athletic teams won and lost. Things next year would be pretty much as they had been this year. In the last third of the 20th century, that presumption had obviously become inadequate, and so Monan charged the council of 25 people, including 10 undergraduate and graduate students, to evaluate specific programs. But it also had to help articulate a larger vision. “After the storms and tempests of the last eight or 10 years,” their final report would say, “it is time to set a new course.” The new captain would steer that course.

To begin with, the traditional commitments of Boston College were reaffirmed, with its Jesuit character remaining at the core. A Jesuit university, Monan would say, “exists to share an appreciation of the illuminating power” that came from recognizing “the nobility of intellect *and* faith, and the continuity between them.” With the goal of sustaining that insight, no effort would be spared to attract “committed and professional scholar-teachers” from within the order. The school’s wider religious orientation was “not narrow or restrictive, but generous and open,” and it would continue to be so.



1. Speaking on April 22, 1986, at the dedication of renovated Bapst and Burns Libraries. 2. With (from left) former Irish Prime Minister Garret FitzGerald, U.S. House Speaker Thomas P. O'Neill Jr. '36, and President Ronald Reagan, in Washington, D.C., March 17, 1986. 3. At the 1988 dedication of Conte Forum. 4. At the dedication of the O'Neill Library on October 14, 1984, flanked by David S. Nelson '57, JD'60, H'79, chair of the Board of Trustees, and O'Neill.

Undergraduate education was the highest priority, with a stress on the “value dimensions” of all branches of learning, while at the same time “selective excellence” in graduate programs would be encouraged. In the hiring of new faculty members, active research scholars were of course desirable, but the planning committee insisted “strongly and unequivocally” that teaching ability was the decisive requirement: The brilliant scholar who could not communicate ideas in the classroom was not acceptable. These and other high-minded ideals had to be realized in specific programs, and almost no aspect of University life was overlooked. The student body would expand modestly, though not so much that “personalized instruction” and “humane living conditions” were sacrificed. Even the plans of particular academic departments were discussed: Philosophy should rely less on graduate teaching assistants; psychology should explore a five-year program awarding a BA and an MA at the same time; the social work school might consider establishing an undergraduate program. More than 50 pages of the

council’s report were devoted to this kind of detailed analysis. Not all ideas proposed were wise or feasible. Still, the mere consideration of them offered guidance for what the University might become.

The ideas that Monan and his planners rejected would have produced a very different Boston College from the one of today. A dramatic increase in the number of tuition-paying students, for example, copying the model of the large American state universities, might have been tempting for an institution just emerging from budgetary uncertainty. But that path was not taken: The large lecture class of four or five hundred students, who saw their professor only from a distance, would not be part of the teaching and learning experience at Chestnut Hill. Similarly, insistence that the faculty consist of “scholar-teachers” foreclosed other options. Some universities sought academic “stars,” public intellectuals better known off campus than on and kept as far away from most students as possible. That, too, was unacceptable. Both in what it decided to do and in what it

chose not to do, Boston College entered the nearly quarter-century tenure of its new president with a clear sense of the kind of university it wanted to be.

Ideals need to be realized, however, and it was here that Monan and the team he assembled had lasting impact, through the unglamorous work of administration. Two years before his arrival, the University had hired a new financial vice president, John Smith, H'91, who at once began the more professional management of resources. A certified public accountant with an MBA from New York University, Smith "brought a type of financial imagination and creativity to his responsibilities that made it possible for the University to make the enormous strides we have made," Monan said appreciatively. Within months of the new president taking office, "we had devised a financial plan that assured us that we really had an institutional future." Next, Monan appointed Frank Campanella, H'01, a professor from the business school, to the position of executive vice president of the University, effectively a chief operating officer. A skilled teacher, he was also "refreshingly Frank," Monan punned, overseeing the "day-to-day complexities" of the institution with a "directness and honesty and avoidance of gamesmanship" that promoted a "trustworthiness that healed divisions."

Together, the three saw to it that budget deficits remained a thing of the past, and they initiated what would prove to be an uninterrupted building boom: seven new residence halls; replacement of separate basketball and hockey arenas with a combined facility; expansion of the football stadium; a theater and performing arts center; a new chemistry building; a massive new library, providing an adequate home for the University's intellectual assets for the first time in its history. Renovation was part of the plan too, beginning with Gasson Hall, the University's visual signature, and the carving out of a home in Devlin Hall for the newly established McMullen Museum of Art. The campus had consisted of about 60 buildings

**A dramatic increase in the number of tuition-paying students, the model of the large American state universities, might have been tempting. But the lecture class of five hundred students, who saw their professor only from a distance, would not be the experience at Chestnut Hill.**

when Monan arrived as president; when he retired, it had more than 90, some of them on the campus of the former Newton College of the Sacred Heart. Consolidation of that previously independent institution into Boston College in the middle 1970s would not have been possible without the sophisticated managerial skills that marked Monan's tenure from the beginning. The professionalization of nearly every office on campus—from finance to enrollment management to public relations to

information technology—ensured that progress once made could not be undone.

Paying for all this required new thinking and a new attention to fundraising. Everyone seemed to realize, as one outside consultant put it, that there was tremendous "latent, dammed up potential" at Boston College, if only it could be tapped. All universities of the era were bolstering their development programs (later rechristened "advancement"), and Monan joined them in 1976 by announcing the *New Heights* campaign.

Though the hoped-for \$21 million seems modest by later standards, it was at the time the most ambitious amount the University had ever attempted to raise. With trustee leadership and a steadily broadening base of support among alumni, the goal was outrun by nearly 20 percent. This established the pattern of exceeding expectations that would come to seem normal in the subsequent campaigns he oversaw and in those that have followed, but it was a normalcy



As an honoree at the 1982 Harvard Commencement with fellow honoree Mother Teresa (and companion) and Harvard President Derek Bok.

that was hard won. In the same way, increasing external support for research conducted by faculty and students became a hallmark of the Monan years, amounting to nearly \$20 million annually by the end of the century. A university that had once seemed on the financial brink had become a big and successful business, perhaps not the accomplishment that one might have expected from an expert on Aristotle.

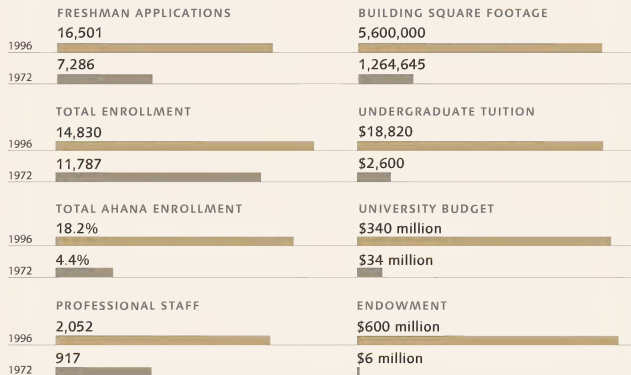
Tangible measures of success such as these were accompanied by intangibles that were every bit as important. The steady transformation of the school during the Monan years into a truly national university was perhaps the most telling. From its founding at the time of the Civil War, Boston College had always been "Boston's College," closely identified with its surrounding local community, and it remained so for decades. As late as 1960, two-thirds of the student body still came from the city of Boston or its immediate suburban ring. With the decision for full coeducation, however, and increasing efforts to attract top students no matter where they lived, the geography of applicants widened, spreading first down the East Coast and then moving even farther afield. These incipient trends rapidly picked up momentum in the Monan presidency and became perma-

nent. In the early 1980s, the number of high school seniors applying from Florida ranked that state in 13th position, with California 15th; during Monan's final year, California had moved up to fifth place (behind Massachusetts, New York, New Jersey, and Connecticut) and Florida was seventh. The reputation of the University was no longer only a local one.

No university president works or accomplishes anything alone. "Whatever responsibility I had for Boston College," Monan said at a ceremony marking his retirement in 1996, "it was a responsibility enthusiastically shared by thousands of willing hands." A university, Monan said, "does not create intelligence or athletic ability or virtue or character. It prays for the insight to recognize them in its students; it is thankful for them; and it attempts to muster the best tools available to assist them to follow its vision of what the fully educated person can be." ■

James M. O'Toole '72, Ph.D.'87, holds the Charles I. Clough Millennium Chair in History at Boston College, and is the award-winning author of books on American Catholic history and culture, including *The Faithful: A History of Catholics in America* (2008). He recently completed a history of Boston College.

## MONAN'S PRESIDENCY: BY THE NUMBERS





On the lawn alongside St. Mary's Hall on June 3, 1980, at a Mass celebrating his 25th year in the priesthood. Monan greets Mary Latson, a receptionist in his office.

# Thanksgiving

HIS CALLING

By Joseph M. O'Keefe, SJ

*The following was edited from the homily delivered at a Mass of Christian Burial in St. Ignatius Church, on March 22, 2017.*

**T**HE FIRST TIME I ATTENDED A MASS CELEBRATED by Fr. Monan, and at every other of his Masses afterward, I would hear him say, "Eucharist means thanksgiving." So, let us heed his words.

*We pray in thanksgiving for his scholarship.* J. Donald Monan, SJ, was an Aristotelian scholar who pondered the vital questions: What does it mean to be human? How do we relate to the transcendent? How shall we live together? He

was the author of *Moral Knowledge and its Methodology in Aristotle*, which shed light on the *Nicomachean Ethics*, whose truths undoubtedly shaped his intense engagement with the world. He followed his long Jesuit course of studies with a doctorate in philosophy from the University of Louvain, in Belgium, and postdoctoral work in Paris and Munich.

But his interest went beyond ancient philosophy. Fr. Monan particularly admired the work of the 20th century French existentialist philosopher Gabriel Marcel. In his book *Creative Fidelity*, Marcel wrote, "A truly alive person is not merely someone who has a taste for life, but somebody who spreads that taste, showering it, as it were, around him."



Don Monan was truly alive by this definition.

*We pray in thanksgiving for his graciousness.* Knowledge without wisdom can be cold comfort. Knowledge with wisdom is full of human warmth. No matter where you stood in life, Don treated you with warmth and respect. And he was always appreciative. Kim Noonan, the Jesuit community nurse, would accompany Don to his many doctor's appointments over these past months. She recounted that one day the wait for the doctor unexpectedly extended through lunchtime. Kim offered to share her lunch and gave Don half a sandwich. He started eating and said, "Thank you so much. This is delicious." It was a peanut butter and jelly sandwich.

I am sure that each of us here can recall examples of Don's goodness. He was the quintessential gentleman. And, despite his many commitments, he was always an encouraging presence in the Jesuit community—I can certainly testify to that. And how many alumni remember with fondness his fatherly presence? Don had a remarkable ability to balance compassion with competence.

*We pray in thanksgiving for his practical wisdom.* As you probably know, Don was a native of upstate New York, and fell in love with hockey at a very early age. I am reminded today of a quote attributed to Wayne Gretzky, "A good hockey player plays where the puck is. A great hockey player plays where the puck is going to be." In 1972 when he came to a local college that was struggling to survive, Fr. Monan played where the puck was going to be. He saw possibilities that no one else saw. He was a visionary and during his long tenure as president and ever since, that vision has become a reality.

*We pray in thanksgiving for his life of service.* Fr. Monan's concern and commitment went beyond Chestnut Hill. In this regard, he exemplified the mission of the Society of Jesus. We Jesuits are not to remain in the sacristy; we are to live in the world out there. He believed that we are to engage the marketplace of ideas, in dialogue with people of different faiths and ideologies, both on campus and off campus. We are to find common ground because we are steadfastly committed to the common good. Ever the Aristotelian, Fr. Monan engaged himself in the *polis*. He brought the best of the priesthood to the public forum, bringing to bear his analytic skills, urging people to be attentive to the better angels of their nature, bridging differences, keeping in mind the good of all.

He was committed to his vision for Boston College and, with similar passion and zeal, to his vision for Boston as a place of civility and culture, a place of opportunity not

Ever the Aristotelian, Fr. Monan engaged himself in the *polis*. He brought the best of the priesthood to the public forum, bringing to bear his analytic skills, urging people to be attentive to the better angels of their nature, bridging differences, keeping in mind the good of all.

just for the few, but for the many, especially the most vulnerable. He was dedicated to institutions in the Commonwealth, especially the court system. And, most dear to my heart, he was committed to hold up as exemplars those who put themselves in harm's way for the good of others, such as the courageous men and women, Jesuits and lay, who spoke truth to power in El Salvador and paid the ultimate price. They modeled for him the responsibility

of intellectuals to face the most pressing issues of the day as harbingers of reason and truth. Don Monan, in partnership with people of good will, was relentless in calling to accountability those who perpetrated that violence and murder. He believed in a faith that does justice.

*We pray in thanksgiving for his faithfulness.* It is said that Saint Paul, shortly before his death, wrote to his protégé Timothy to offer some last words of advice. After a life of teaching and preaching and pastoring in many different settings to all kinds of people, Paul reflected back on his years with these words many of us know. "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race; I have kept the faith." And he told Timothy to "proclaim the word; to be persistent whether it is convenient or inconvenient; to convince, to reprimand, to encourage through all patience and teaching; to be self-possessed in all circumstances; to put up with hardship; to perform the work of an evangelist; to fulfill your ministry." I believe that Don Monan would have similar parting words for us, each of us in our own vocation and in the circumstances of our lives as leaders, as professionals, as business people, as scholars, as brother Jesuits, as friends, and as family members. I believe he would ask us to preach the Gospel to which he gave his life, to preach through words, yes, but more so through lives marked, as was his, by thoughtfulness, graciousness, competence, and commitment to lasting values. He would urge us on, "Fight the good fight, finish the race, keep the faith."

In the sixth chapter of John's Gospel, Jesus tells his disciples that He alone is their strength and sustenance, in this life and the next. And He teaches them that it is the will of the Father that everyone who sees the Son and believes in Him may have eternal life, and that, on the last day, He shall raise them up.

At this Eucharist we give thanks that Fr. J. Donald Monan of the Society of Jesus rises today through the God to whom he dedicated his life. ■

The former dean of the Lynch School of Education, Joseph M. O'Keefe, SJ, was recently named rector of Ciszek Hall, the residence for Jesuit scholastics at Fordham University.

# Necessary engagement

J. DONALD MONAN ON FAITH AND KNOWLEDGE

*The essay that follows was drawn from a talk delivered by Fr. Monan at the annual dinner of the Boston College Fides Society on May 20, 1984.*

THE CONCEPT OF A RELIGIOUSLY AFFILIATED university is a difficult one. It attempts to combine two of the most powerful and original forces in world culture: religious faith that responds to God's communication of truth in history, and the controlled and methodic disciplines of the sciences. They stand separate, autonomous; and in their individual worth, they merit a freedom to pursue their own paths and to be answerable to their own authorities. Because they are so radically different, the power of religious faith and the power of human understanding carry seeds of tension—of total incompatibility, some would say.

Religious faith, for example, offers calm assurance of the ultimate origin and meaning of human existence. By contrast, the intellectual disciplines draw their power from an urgent need to question and inquire and to cross old frontiers. Any combining of these forces will be difficult. And yet, if one were to become irrelevant, or adversarial to the other, both would suffer irreparably, as would the society that depends upon them.

The French philosopher Gabriel Marcel likens religious faith to the unconditional, perduring love of one person for another. Marcel compares faith to human love because of two of love's characteristics. It can be spoken once-and-for-all in a single word, and yet be clarified and deepened and expanded throughout a lifetime. Love is a promise open to a future.

The conditions for love's growth are many. It grows in those questionings that accompany the making of friends, the birth of children, the evolution of a family's social and economic life. It grows, too, in those situations where new questions are addressed by spouses to each other—not in a spirit of doubting love, but with an honest concern for light not seen, for an illumination equal to a new situation. In short, love remains constant without losing its mobility; it does not cease to be a light even while asking new questions that are part of life itself.

This same resilience and mobility and capacity for growth is the mark of a living faith. Faith grows and develops not only in isolation but in sincere engagement with science and industry and the arts. Social and cultural and historical

situations prompt questions not in any spirit of unfaith or of retracting a trust, but with a genuine concern for light not seen, for an illumination equal to a new situation. Rather than be incompatible with Christian faith, the university and its questioning are an indispensable counterpart in the effort to keep faith commensurate with the age and ages of mankind.

THE POINT IS THAT IN THE FAMILIAR LIVING OF human love there is room for sincere questioning, which neither suspends nor abdicates love once given, nor descends to the level of play-acting, where all the answers are known before the questions are asked. And in the serious business of living within faith, there is room for those questions that arise from an evolving science or culture or philosophy that are neither abdications of faith nor insincere role-playing.

There is another characteristic of human love that can provide the formula for combining the disparate elements within the religiously affiliated university. The relationship of human love is never fixed or finished. It is always susceptible to growth and, therefore, it is always fragile and leaves each person perpetually vulnerable. For that reason, human love calls upon the very best in both parties—the recognition that neither is self-sufficient, but paradoxically each depends upon the other if they are to be fully themselves. This calls for not a little humility, and much respect directed to the other. It calls for the willingness to receive as well as to give. And it calls for the willing acceptance of risk, without which nothing can be gained through growth because nothing can be lost.

Over the course of time, these characteristics of love have not always been observed at religiously affiliated universities. Whenever either party, be it religious faith or the power of human sciences, lost courage or lost humility or lost the ability to respect and receive from the other, the vulnerable link dissolved. But human love still constitutes the leaven that makes human growth possible. And in a true sense the link between the religious beliefs and aspirations of a society and its university settings is a critical ingredient for the growth of culture. That link is as fragile and yet enriching as the link of love itself. ■

The complete text of this talk was published in *Echoes of a University Presidency* (2008), a collection of Fr. Monan's speeches. The book may be purchased at a discount from the Boston College Bookstore via [bc.edu/bcm](http://bc.edu/bcm).

# C21 Notes

## QUOTABLE

"Four traits characterize a morally formed leader or anyone who wants an adult conscience worthy of respect:

1. Allegiance to the truth, against the tendency to rationalize and to deceive ourselves.
2. Commitment to justice and the common good, recognizing that all people have dignity, not just our friends, not just our tribe.
3. Personal integrity, in that what we do matches what we say we believe in.
4. All of the above, wrapped in a cloth of compassion. "

—From remarks by professor of theology Stephen Pope during a panel discussion on "Leadership through Conscience, Service, and Relationships" sponsored by the Church in the 21st Century Center on January 31, 2017, in the Murray Room.



The complete discussion on leadership may be viewed at Full Story, via [bc.edu/bcm](http://bc.edu/bcm).

## Focused group

By William Bole

A discerning audience takes in Scorsese's "Jesuit film"

THE SOMBER FATE OF PORTUGUESE Jesuit missionaries in Japan, circa 1630, would seem an improbable storyline for a Hollywood epic these days. But that is the rarefied setting of *Silence*, a film directed by Martin Scorsese with a cast including Andrew Garfield, Adam Driver, and Liam Neeson. The occasion of a movie about the Society of Jesus produced for a mass audience was enough for Boston College to hold a March 24 screening of the film, followed by an evening forum that teased out such themes as the potential for conflict between the demands of faith and the obligations of humanity.

Higgins 300, a steeply tiered hall of some 150 seats, was full to overflowing with students, faculty, and guests as the Boisi Center for Religion and American Public Life presented the 161-minute film on a lecture screen at the front. The viewing would be followed by a discussion to

include Hitomi Omata Rappo, a visiting researcher at the University's Institute for Advanced Jesuit Studies; Robert Maryks, an associate professor of history; and film studies professor Richard Blake, SJ.

*Silence* takes place during the time of the *Kakure* (hidden) Christians who practiced the faith in secret after Japanese military authorities banned Catholicism in 1620. The film is based on the 1966 novel of the same name by Shūsaku Endō, a Japanese Catholic convert. It opens with graphic scenes of torture, execution, and crucifixion inflicted by the samurai on Christians in Buddhist Japan, and then it cuts to a Jesuit superior's room in Macao, the Portuguese colony on China's coast where the order trained its missionaries. The superior is explaining to two young priests that their mentor—Fr. Cristóvão Ferreira, the leader of the Jesuit mission in Japan played by Neeson—has renounced



Scorsese on the set of *Silence*. The film was shot in Taiwan and Macao.

his faith amid the persecutions. The two are incredulous and insist on going to Japan to find Fr. Ferreira. The superior reluctantly gives them permission to sail, saying they'll be the last two priests in that land, "an army of two."

In Nagasaki, Frs. Rodrigues (Garfield) and Garupe (Driver) minister to the hidden Christians, many thousands of whom are dying for their beliefs. The *Kakure* are marched through lush flora to natural hot springs, and burned with ladles of steaming water. There are frequent crucifixions on a gorgeous rocky shore. Decapitated heads literally roll, meanderingly at times.

During the screening in Higgins, there appeared to be little covering of eyes, but audible groans, as might be expected from any movie audience. Congregating on a Jesuit university campus, this was not, however, a general audience. Murmurs of appreciation and recognition could be

heard at moments that might have meant less to some who saw *Silence* during its theater run, which began on December 23, 2016. In one scene, Driver's Fr. Garupe is contrite over his feelings of anger and frustration at the obstacles faced by missionaries. Garfield's Fr. Rodrigues offers him words of assurance, before teasing, "And you're a bad Jesuit." The Higgins crowd responded with inordinate laughter. Then Garfield's character, referring to their glorious mission to find Fr. Ferreira and spread the faith in Japan, says, "We prayed for this in the *Exercises*." Echoes of "the *Exercises*" flitted across rows from those undoubtedly impressed that a Hollywood production was invoking the 1548 *Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius of Loyola*.

The two Jesuits are apprehended and separated, with Garupe drowning while trying to rescue Christians. Rodrigues

begins to face an excruciating choice. Authorities are telling him they'll spare the lives of his flock if he apostatizes, renouncing the faith by symbolically stepping on the *fumi-e* (an image of Jesus). Christians are periodically lined up and executed before his eyes as he agonizes over the decision. In a bamboo-lined cell, the missionary prays but registers only silence in response. He also begins to wonder if his resistance is selfish, a product of his desire to achieve the triumph of martyrdom.

Enter Neeson's Fr. Ferreira. The Jesuit leader has indeed disavowed Christianity; he has also inherited a Japanese wife and children from an executed Christian. "Our religion does not take root in this country," Ferreira tells Rodrigues after authorities deliver him to the cell to argue for apostasy. Philosophical debate ensues between the two, on such questions as universal salvation, religious pluralism, and the

peculiar nature of Japanese Christianity—Ferreira contends that Christians there confuse the Son of God with the sun of traditional worship. “Do you have a right to make them suffer?” he asks rhetorically during another visit. Rodrigues demurs, but before a fresh round of executions, he steps on the *fumi-e*.

There’s barely a ray of religious hope until later on when an older Rodrigues, married and living out his years in Japan,

er for *America*, the Jesuit-edited biweekly magazine (whose editor-at-large, James Martin, SJ, M.Div.’98, served as *Silence*’s theological consultant). “I can’t imagine the Netflix crowd getting together to watch three hours of torture form. It’s talk. It’s thought, and it seems to go on interminably.” The Jesuit also suggested that Scorsese, who graduated from the (not-Jesuit) Cardinal Hayes High School in the Bronx and directed the controversial 1988

*Dei Gloriam* (“For the Greater Glory of God”), the Latin motto of the Society of Jesus. During the Q&A, a middle-aged man in the back stood up to argue for the film’s artistic merit and asked other panelists to give their opinions.

“I did like the movie,” said Maryks, associate director of the Institute for Advanced Jesuit Studies. Maryks teaches a class on representations of Jesuits in film—a couple of examples being *The Mission* (1986) and *The Exorcist* (1973)—and he said of *Silence*, “It’s wonderful material for teaching purposes.” Speaking as an ethicist, Erik Owens, the Boisi Center’s interim director who moderated the forum, added that the film managed to dramatize weighty topics such as cross-cultural conflict, the incertitude of faith, and “responsibility for people’s lives.” Blake responded mildly, “If you’re looking for some didactic purpose, there’s a lot in there.”

The film garnered an Oscar nomination for its cinematographer, Rodrigo Prieto, and many of Blake’s fellow reviewers credited the artistic purpose in the film, often giving *Silence* four out of five stars. Matt Zoller Seitz of *RogerEbert.com* was one such critic. Seitz wrote in late December, “This is not the sort of film you ‘like’ or ‘don’t like.’ It’s a film that you experience and then live with.” ■

This was not a general audience.

Murmurs of appreciation and recognition could be heard at moments that might have meant less to some who saw *Silence* during its theater run.

pictures Jesus telling him, “I suffered beside you. I was never silent.”

After the screening and light refreshments, Higgins 300 remained packed for the 90-minute panel discussion, cosponsored by the Center for Ignatian Spirituality, the Church in the 21st Century Center, and the Institute for the Liberal Arts. In a presentation before the discussion proper, Rappo—who wrote her doctoral dissertation on European images of Japan’s Christian martyrs—described *Silence* as a “mix of fact and fiction.” Ferreira, who died in 1650, is a historical figure, portrayed accurately in the film but inaccurately in European imagery as a Jesuit martyr, Rappo said, drawing laughs as she launched a slide titled “Fake News.” Rodrigues is based loosely on an Italian Jesuit, and Garupe is fictional. The Japanese scholar pointed out that an historical confrontation between Ferreira and visiting Jesuits reported in the 1640s served as a model for the dialogue with Rodrigues. She also noted that Japanese authorities had already begun to take “a softer approach” to quelling Christianity a full decade before the story of *Silence* purportedly takes place.

The flashpoint of the forum was Blake’s panning of the movie. “It was a bomb. It is a box office catastrophe,” said the priest, a scholar of religious imagery in American popular films and a film review-

er film *The Last Temptation of Christ*, has a weakness for “high-school religion.” He might have been alluding to the director’s use of heavy-handed symbolism, including a local Christian’s Judas-like betrayal of Rodrigues for 300 pieces of silver.

Blake’s criticism caused a bit of unrest in Higgins 300. The audience had applauded vigorously at the end of the movie, only in part due to the words appearing just before the closing credits—*Ad Majorem*

## School of Theology and Ministry summer lectures

### 17th Annual Evelyn Underhill Lecture in Christian Spirituality: The Meeting of East and West—Spirituality Beyond Boundaries

July 8

Presenter: Rev. Dr. John Philip Newell, founder of the School of Celtic

Consciousness, distinguished visiting scholar of spirituality at the Iliff School of Theology, University of Denver, ordained minister in the Church of Scotland

Location/Time: Robsham Theater, 10:00–11:45 a.m.

### Ninth Annual Mary Of Magdala Celebration: Mary Magdalene and the Women Disciples in the Gospel of Luke

July 21

Presenter: Barbara Reid, OP, professor of New Testament studies and academic dean at Catholic Theological Union at Chicago

Location/Time: St. Ignatius Church and Heights Room, Corcoran Commons, 12:00–3:00 p.m. (This celebration begins with Mass, followed by lunch and a lecture.)

For more information, visit [bc.edu/schools/stm/edevnts/events](http://bc.edu/schools/stm/edevnts/events)

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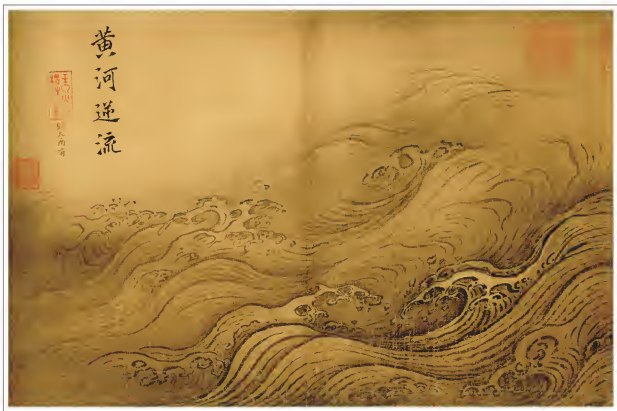
Rafael Soriano left Fidel Castro's Cuba in 1962 for artistic freedom. But after arriving in Miami, he would make no art for two years. Then he had "an awakening"

From the O'Neill Library



*Messy Painter* (22 x 32 inches) was one of 13 pieces in an exhibition by Jordan Barros '19 titled *My Black is Beautiful*, on display during February at the O'Neill Library's Level One Gallery. Barros, a studio art major from North Easton, Massachusetts, drew this piece in pen and marker in July 2016 as the cover for a hip-hop album by Khari King '19. It was scanned and enlarged from an original 5 x 8 inches for the exhibition, which was sponsored by the Thea Bowman AHANA and Intercultural Center, the office of the vice president for student affairs, and the Boston College Libraries.





Painting by Ma Yuan (circa 1160–1225). The author translates the title at upper left as *The Reversing Flow of the Yellow River*.

## RIVER OF WOES

By Ling Zhang

How a flood control policy designed to save an empire helped destroy it

**I**MAGINE YOU ARE LIVING IN CENTRAL HEBEI, A VAST plain south of what is now Beijing, on the sixth day of the sixth lunar month, in the eighth year of the Festive Era during the reign of Emperor Renzong—July 19, 1048, by the modern calendar. You may still be experiencing or trying to recover from hardship due to droughts, earthquakes, and harvest failures in the previous few years. You have never seen the Yellow River before; it has always been far away. Family elders may have told you stories about the river but, whether you are a peasant or a town-dweller, it has had nothing to do with your daily life. All of a sudden, on this day, you hear a roaring in the distance. It grows louder and louder, screams rising out of the thundering. Before you have time to figure out what is happening, the water comes upon you in gigantic torrents. People, livestock, and buildings are swallowed by the violent waves. Stunned, you are swept away. Gasping for air and close to drowning, you begin to paddle as the old, weak, and unlucky are sucked under around you. You and some lucky others grab onto trees or make it to high ground.

No one in central Hebei is prepared. No one even knows which river it is. Over the next several hours, you watch the torrents sweeping away whole villages, your neighbors, your children, your parents. Only after days pass do the high waters begin to ebb. Dead bodies of people and animals bob in the currents. As you and your fellow survivors desperately wait for rescue and relief, which may never arrive, you look into one another's eyes, already drained of hope. Perhaps all that is left are questions. "Why did this happen?" and "Why did this happen to us?"

These questions intrigue modern readers of history as well. For nearly a thousand years, the river and the plain abided alongside each other, the river essentially forming the plain's southern border. How did this long status quo come to an abrupt end? We know in retrospect that the river not only flooded but shifted its course into the heart of the Hebei Plain for 80 years; that in 1128 the river veered back out of this land, to head south. Since then, it has stayed away from Hebei. Was this unique, brief episode of entanglement between river and plain a random incident?

If we follow modern hydrologists' explanation, that the river was "prone to siltation, prone to overflow, and prone to course shifts," it seems what happened in 1048 was inevitable, a tragic but natural catastrophe brought about by the river's forces. Those living in the 11th century who experienced the event—educated men and officials inside and outside Hebei, perhaps even Emperor Renzong—likely reached another answer. Taught to believe in Heaven's Mandate as well as in the resonance between natural phenomena and human behaviors, they probably wondered whether this disaster was punishment for human or state misconduct, following on a series of portentous signs from previous years, such as earthquakes, red snow, and plagues of locusts. However different they appear, these dual explanations of the flood of 1048 agree on one point: Humans were not directly involved in the physical movement of the river. And yet they were.

I studied 350 years of historical records leading up to 1048, paying particular attention to 36 documented occasions when river flooding, bank ruptures, or course shifts took place. They demonstrate the river's tendency to shift between two trajectories, northward into Hebei or southward into the heart of Henan, the region that would emerge as the core of the Song Dynasty and the site of its capital, Kaifeng. What became immediately obvious is that in the late 10th century, the river consistently flooded the area to its south. And by the end of the 10th century, the river began to flood the area to its north with greater frequency.

In 1015, the Yellow River broke its southern bank and flooded multiple locations in Henan. As the imperial court took stock of

posals, the approach he outlined was already quietly in production. The state was taking better care of the river's southern banks, while directing small portions of river water northward into Hebei. In the years 982, 983, 984, 1000, 1004, 1019–1021, and 1027, when the river threatened its southern banks and Henan, the court promptly acted to repair bank ruptures and build new dykes. Twice it ordered its ministers to perform the highest level of state rituals at the sites of the southern ruptures, offering the Tailao sacrifice of an ox, a pig, and a goat and jade plates to the river god.

There is no evidence of extensive dyke construction to protect the northern banks; there was no sacrifice dedicated to any northerly flood. Instead, hydraulic efforts focused on opening diversionary channels northward: the first one in 993, the second in 994, the third in 1012, the fourth in 1015, and several more during 1019–1021.

The river's situation remains somewhat unclear between 1042 and 1047, due to a lack of historical records. Only a few flooding events appear to have been reported, all on a small scale. This was probably due to the fact that both northern and southern China were suffering from extensive drought. This absence of serious flooding doubtless helped to justify the state's decision not to repair a north bank rupture in 1034. For some six quiet years, the river silted up its riverbed, built up its hydraulic force, and waited for the right moment to explode. The moment came with a heavy rainfall in the summer of 1048. The Yellow River broke through its northern banks and surged northward, shifting its course and making a delta of the Hebei Plain. The flood's attack, its aftermath,

and the ensuing famine killed and displaced at least one million people, more than 20 percent of Hebei's population.

From the autumn of 1048 through 1049, standing waters of the Yellow River ruined three seasons of crops. The Song imperial court ordered regional and local governments to open up their granaries to relieve Hebei's starvation. Yet officials were not trained for this kind of emergency. Unsure how to cope with the large numbers of refugees, they gathered the displaced into small urban slums and set up stoves to cook for them and feed them collectively. As large crowds congregated, hardship, malnourishment, and poor hygiene led to the outbreak of infectious diseases. Death tolls mounted even higher. The prefect of Qingzhou, a city well south of the river, observed that the government's measures were "in the name of saving people, but in fact killed them."

Soon civilian granaries were exhausted. The government began to draft male refugees into armies and provide them with military rations as a way to reduce the refugee population. But even military granaries were overburdened and grew short on supplies. Some men became outlaws, raiding towns and cities to obtain food. Children, the elderly, and women turned to begging on the street, sometimes selling themselves in exchange for food. Running out of resources as well as relief strategies, the Song government permitted this trade and encouraged wealthy, powerful families to "adopt" refugees as servants.

In the early 1050s, the lower Yangtze and Huai valleys experienced drought and harvest failures, and southern farmers became

However different they appear, the explanations of the flood of 1048 agree on one point: Humans were not directly involved in the movement of the river. And yet they were.

the destruction, an eighth-rank assistant staff writer and revising editor from the Institutes and Archives, named Li Chui, handed in a lengthy essay on "The Geographic Advantages of a Diversion of the Yellow River." Li argued that damage to Henan harmed the state as a whole and that the state should divert the river northward to harm Hebei instead. A north-flowing river would both "benefit the common people" in the south, he wrote, and turn the river into a defensive barrier within Hebei to prevent the invasion of frontier gangsters. The imperial court did not accept Li's proposal, and formally declined it again after a catastrophic flood in 1019 wrought havoc on 32 districts south of the river; the court referred to the idea then as "troublesome," but left behind no explicit explanation. My own explanation is that Li's proposals met resistance from Hebei natives of high rank at the imperial court.

And yet, the Song empire was a highly activist state, in which political practices were carried out in a busy and fuzzy fashion, through subtle negotiations. Despite the dismissal of Li Chui's pro-

less able to meet the central government's demands to contribute to the welfare of Hebei.

WHAT HAPPENED IN THE SUMMER OF 1048 WAS NOT A single incident, but rather a harbinger of difficult times ahead. For the 80 years that the Yellow River occupied the Hebei Plain, the river flooded nearly every other year. Its 435-mile-long meandering flow created three other courses that stretched in different directions inside Hebei. More and more area was attacked by the torrents or submerged in the river's stagnant water. To survive, the remaining population resorted to a variety of local solutions. Some inhabitants destroyed government dykes or built private dykes to defend themselves from the waters; some gave up farming and adapted to other livelihoods, including fishing and salt production. At the turn of the 12th century, Hebei was a desolate land, stricken with suffering people, turbulent waters, wild weeds, and numerous patches of yellow sand.

The environmental drama came to an end in 1128, as the Yellow River shifted out of Hebei, turning clockwise by 90 degrees. Despite the river's departure, Hebei failed to join south China in its revolutionary economic growth. Instead, the region became a cen-

ter of consumption that endlessly drew in supplies—mainly cheap goods such as grain. Hebei's utter dependence on the state and its consumption of external wealth dragged the state down in a spiral toward irremediable financial exhaustion.

The environmental consequences of the river's occupation of Hebei—a fraught list that includes a disordered water system, the deterioration of soil due to salinization and sandification, and the exhaustion of forests and other vegetation—continues to shape the region's challenges today. We experience the legacy of the flood of 1048 on a stroll down a street in some town of Hebei on a spring day, when we are blinded by fierce sandstorms and lose our way. ■

Ling Zhang is an associate professor of history at Boston College. Her essay is drawn and adapted from *The River, the Plain, and the State: An Environmental Drama in Northern Song China, 1048–1128* (copyright © 2016 by Ling Zhang. Reprinted with the permission of Cambridge University Press). This work was recognized with the 2017 George Perkins Marsh Prize for best book in environmental history by the American Society for Environmental History. It may be ordered at a discount from the Boston College Bookstore via BCM's website, [bc.edu/bcm](http://bc.edu/bcm).

## VANISHING POINT

By Roberto S. Goizueta

Rafael Soriano left Fidel Castro's Cuba in 1962 for artistic freedom. But after arriving in Miami, he would make no art for two years. Then he had "an awakening"

AMONG THE GREAT PAINTERS OF THE 20TH CENTURY, many stand out for the ability to convey, in sometimes stark terms, the ambiguities of a century that brought both unimagined prosperity and unimaginable horrors. The art of Edvard Munch and the German expressionists called attention to this quality of modern "progress." So did cubism, Dada, surrealism, and abstract expressionism—artistic movements that deconstructed modernity's claim to coherence and rationality. The Real, their adherents asserted, was neither coherent nor rational.

Certain other artists took issue with the notion of rationality from a different perspective. For them, the flaw lay in the presupposition of a cosmos with human history at its center. Humankind's fundamental alienation was not from history or from our better selves, but from the cosmos, whether that be defined as God or imbued by God or evidence of God. The response of these artists, their art, often strikes us as "spiritual" or "mystical." In painting, the paradigmatic example is perhaps the extraordinary late work of Mark Rothko. "I insist," wrote Rothko, "upon the equal existence of the world engendered in the mind and the world engendered by God outside of it."

Among these spiritual artists, we should also include the great

Latin-American painters Roberto Matta, Wifredo Lam, and Rufino Tamayo. It was their attempt to transcend the self and the human—to reach beyond history, politics, emotion, and psyche to a hint of the cosmos—that distinguished Latin-American magical realism from European surrealism. Rather than directing us toward self-reflection, or toward society, their art draws us to union with the Other (however conceived): This is art as icon.

It is no coincidence that these painters are known for their extraordinary use of color. Intended to seduce, even mesmerize, icons are "*contemplation in color*," as the philosopher Evgeny Trubetsky observed, describing Russian religious icons.

IN POST-ENLIGHTENMENT DEBATES ABOUT RATIONALITY and irrationality, the very attempt at representation, or coherence, was construed to be inherently dishonest: Art could be iconoclastic—attacking and subverting representation—or it could be aniconic, disregarding of representation. Matta, Lam, and others also rejected strict, explicit representation. But their art nonetheless retrieved the possibility of representation. These spiritual artists strained to represent the unrepresentable, asking us to look through their paintings as we would through the



Soriano's 1975 painting *La Soledad (Solitude)*, oil on canvas, 40 x 50 inches.

Christian icon, into a relationship with some dimension of the Real. In religious works, it is transparency that separates the icon from idolatry (and also from pure aestheticism). The object of our gaze is not, strictly speaking, the artwork. This is art as union—among self, cosmos, and Other.

Alongside the paintings of Rothko, Georges Rouault, Ad Reinhardt, Lam, Matta, and Tamayo, the work of the Cuban-American artist Rafael Soriano (1920–2015) represents the recovery of the iconic gaze in 20th-century art. Indeed, the evolution of Soriano's artistic style from his early geometric abstractions is an exemplar. "I do not pretend to convey any message about reality," he wrote in 1993, "I am moved by the longing to travel through my paintings in a dimension of spirit where the intimate and the cosmic converge."

The icon is always a meeting point between worlds, between mysteries: the interior world, which, as Augustine described the presence of God in the soul, is "closer to us than we are to ourselves," and largely incomprehensible; and the exterior world, which likewise escapes our full understanding and control.

Soriano experienced estrangement in his homeland and the isolation of exile. In his Miami studio, he sought through art the

communion for which he yearned: "The anxieties and sadness of exile brought in me an awakening. I began to search for something else; it was through my painting. . . . And I went from geometric painting to a painting that is spiritual. I believe in God, I believe in the spirit."

When the Cuban-American poet Ricardo Pau-Llosa calls Soriano's art "oneiric luminism," or a dream-state, it is this experience of communion that I believe he is describing. Soriano's later paintings seduce us, their translucence drawing us through and beyond what we see, to the light that shines in and through them. They are backlit doorways beckoning us to be one with the cosmos and the Light. What Soriano offers us, in other words, is art as medium. ■

Roberto S. Goizueta is the Margaret O'Brien Flatley Professor of Catholic Theology at Boston College, and associate editor of *Religion and the Arts*, a journal published at this University. His essay is drawn and adapted from a chapter in *Rafael Soriano: The Artist as Mystic* (2017), the catalogue accompanying the exhibition of the same name at the McMullen Museum through June 4, 2017. The volume may be purchased at a discount from the Boston College Bookstore via [bc.edu/bcm](http://bc.edu/bcm).

# WHERE THERE'S SMOKE

By Zachary Jason

Cigarette taxes and health

In 2013, Summer Hawkins had 17.7 million answers to ponder. The assistant professor in the School of Social Work (SSW), in her second year at Boston College, was investigating the effects of cigarette taxes on the rate of maternal smoking during pregnancy. She had obtained the digital records of every birth certificate issued in 28 states from 2000 to 2010, a growth period for anti-smoking activism. From Alaska to West Virginia, all 28 had employed the U.S. Standard Certificate of Live Birth, which included a parent worksheet asking postpartum women about their cigarette consumption. "This wasn't a sample," she says. "It was the population," the kind of big data that allows social epidemiologists like Hawkins to take in the myriad, sometimes hidden impacts of a government health policy. Now, she needed someone with the mathematical nimbleness to "tease apart" the responses and align them with additional state data.

Christopher "Kit" Baum, a Boston College economics professor of some 40 years standing, whose specialty is econometrics, had for some time been applying statistical analysis to questions such as the "uncertainty determinants of corporate liquidity" (for which he and a colleague considered 10 years of a Standard & Poor's database of U.S. companies, 201,552 entries in all). Hawkins proposed Baum take up her project.

Baum applied a model called difference-in-differences to decipher the effect that a range of cigarette tax rates had on various cohorts of mothers. (After 11 years of general increases, the taxes in 2010 spanned from Missouri's \$0.17 a pack to Rhode Island's \$3.46.) Tax levels, it was found, had almost no effect on college-educated pregnant women, who smoked at a rate of 1.5 percent. But expectant mothers lacking a high-school diploma smoked 14–22 fewer cigarettes a month for every \$1 cigarette-tax increase, constituting an average decrease of 5.3 percent. "We have demonstrated," Hawkins and Baum wrote in the August 2014 *American Journal of Public Health*, "that cigarette taxes may be an effective . . . intervention to reduce smoking among the highest risk mothers."

A subsequent, 2015, study conducted by the pair looked at the effect of cigarette taxes on teenagers. It drew on the responses of 717,543 adolescents to the Youth Risk Behavior Surveys taken

in 43 states by the Centers for Disease Control, 1999–2013. "Overall," Hawkins and Baum noted, adolescents were "72 percent less likely to smoke in 2013 than in 1999." But among the facts they gleaned: Tax increases, which were seemingly ineffective with older teens, had a significant impact on teens ages 14 and 15, who showed a 2.2 and 1.6 percent decline in smoking, respectively, for every \$1 in added cost.

In each of their eight collaborative studies since 2014, Hawkins, rangy and ebullient, posits the questions—e.g., How does banning smoking in public places affect children's health? She then collects colossal sets of data from, say, hospitals, health insurers, and state agencies over key time spans. Baum, pensive and imposing, develops econometric models, often aided by his doctoral students, and then runs the data through a high-octane server in St. Clement's Hall. In 2013, he received a courtesy appointment as an SSW professor for his ongoing research contributions.

Last year, *Preventive Medicine* published Hawkins and Baum's answer to that question about smoking bans and children. Through an analysis of 828,000 patient reports generated by 114 hospital emergency departments in Massachusetts, New Hampshire, and Vermont, they determined, initially, that restaurant smoking bans have no apparent effect on the health of children ages 0–17. They went on to slice the data more finely by age, however, and found sharp reductions associated with bans among 10-to-17-year-olds—who likely spend more time in public spaces—in treatments for asthma (-12 percent), respiratory infections (-9 percent), and ear infections (-8 percent).

Baum and Hawkins continue to expand their scope. They've acquired all death certificates issued in the country between 2005 and 2015 to investigate which state-level policies affect the maternal mortality rate; the United States is one of the few countries in the world where the rate has recently climbed. And in January the two received a three-year, \$716,000 grant from the American Cancer Society, to study the 2010 Affordable Care Act's impact on six preventive services, including breast and cervical cancer screenings, in Maine, Massachusetts, and New Hampshire. The data will extend into the hundreds of millions. ■





Bolger, with casks containing his customers' wine.

## Grape expectations

By Benoît Morenne

Stephen Bolger '86, vintner

Stephen Bolger believes in the saying “the best wines are the ones we drink with friends,” but he maintains that those wines are even better when *made* with friends.

Bolger is the founder and CEO of VINIV, a company based in the Bordeaux region of southwestern France that helps customers create their own red wine, using grapes from some of the area's best-known appellations, including Margaux, Saint-Estèphe, and Saint-Émilion.

Clients from more than two dozen countries travel to the small village of Bages, nestled in a geometric patchwork of vineyards, where Bolger guides them through tastings, vineyard visits, and meetings with local enologists, providing an insider's course in the vintner's art and science. VINIV customers, among them heads of state, childhood friends, and an NBA team, choose the grapes (cabernet sauvignon, cabernet franc, or merlot) and the particular vineyards (Bolger has relations with 14), to achieve a desired blend. From initial visit to delivery of bottled wine can take 24 months. The average cost of 288 bottles (one barrel) is around \$13,000—a little more than \$45 a bottle.

“I love the wine stories clients bring to the process,” Bolger says. “Wine is about sharing, having a story to tell.” But running a wine company was not Bolger's

lifelong plan. The New York City native majored in history, attended law school briefly, then worked in international sales of industrial minerals, with stays in Brussels and Paris. He earned an MBA from the University of Chicago, and led a London-based technology consortium.

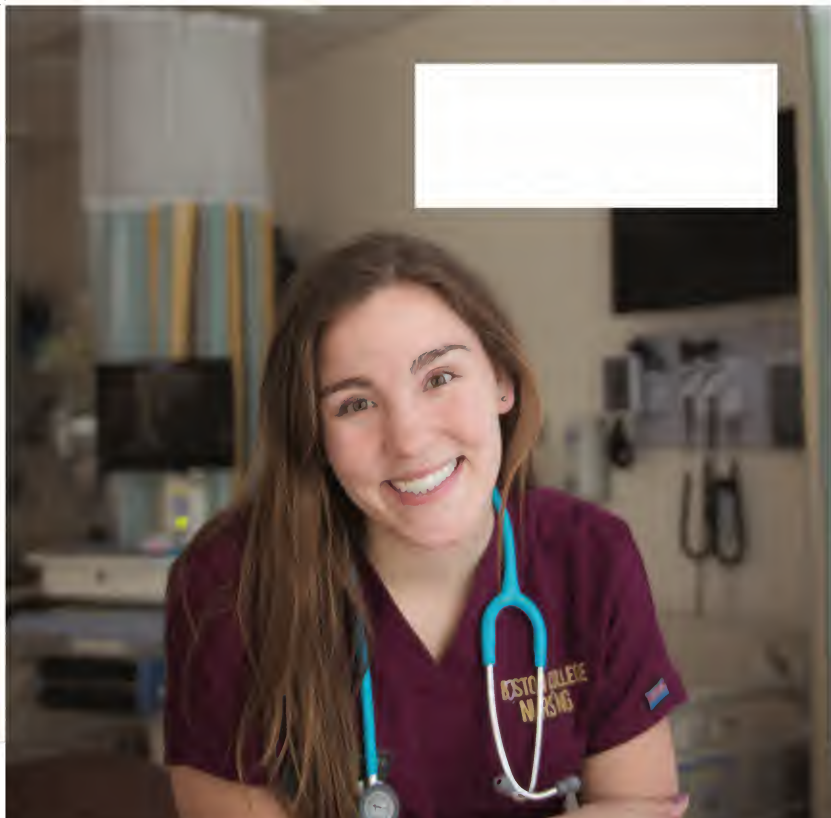
In the early 2000s, he and his wife lost their first child, prompting them to reconsider their life path. “I wanted my eye, heart, and head to be on the same axis,” says Bolger.

With a deep affection for France—his mother is French, and he spent childhood summers in Normandy—Bolger, in 2009, launched VINIV as the French arm of Crushpad, a California custom wine merchant. When Crushpad floundered, he partnered with the Cazes family, owners of the prestigious Château Lynch-Bages. The Cazeses provided funding, technical expertise, and entrée into the tight-knit Bordeaux wine community. VINIV handles fermentation, aging, blending, and bottling at its own facility in Bages.

Bolger likes to think of himself as both “outsider and insider,” a “linchpin” between two worlds: Bordeaux's historically private vintners, and his clients. “I'm in the business of making friends,” he says.

The author is a Paris-based writer.





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